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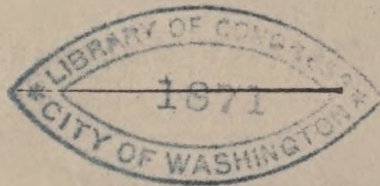
THE  
IRON HEAD;  
OR,  
AN OLD SOLDIER'S STORY  
OF  
CHARLES XII., KING OF SWEDEN.

From the German of

FRANZ HOFFMANN,

BY

M. A. MANDERSON.



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"ON what foundation stands the warrior's pride !  
 How just his hopes, let Swedish Charles decide ;  
 A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,  
 No dangers fright him, and no labours tire ;  
 O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,  
 Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain ;  
 No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,  
 War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field ;  
 Behold surrounding kings their power combine,  
 And one capitulate, and one resign ;  
 Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain :  
 'Think nothing gain'd,' he cries, 'till naught remain,  
 On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,  
 And all be mine beneath the polar sky.'  
 The march begins in military state,  
 And nations on his eye suspended wait ;  
 Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,  
 And Winter barricades the realm of Frost ;  
 He comes, nor want nor cold his course delay ;  
 Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa's day !  
 The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,  
 And shows his miseries in distant lands ;  
 Condemn'd a needy suppliant to wait  
 While ladies interpose and slaves debate.  
 But did not Chance at length her error mend ?  
 Did no subverted empire mark his end ?  
 Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound,  
 Or hostile millions press him to the ground ?  
 His fall was destined to a barren strand,  
 A petty fortress and a dubious hand ;  
 He left a name, at which the world grew pale,  
 To point a moral or adorn a tale !"







# THE IRON HEAD

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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE LIGHTHOUSE.*

UPON the western coast of Sweden, directly opposite to the most northernly point of Denmark, from which it is separated by the Skager Rack, lies upon a rocky island the little town of Marstrand, in which, upon a considerable elevation, is situated the strong fortress of Karlstein, whose lighthouse for many a long year has poured its clear glow over the dark and stormy sea, warning the watchful mariner from the rocks and sands



of this difficult and dangerous coast. For more than a hundred years its beacon-light has beamed nightly down from the high cliff far out over the waters, defying the rage and violence of the heaving billows, which in foaming breakers dash powerlessly against its immovable and rugged base.

And more than one hundred years ago, one evening about twilight, the trusty old warder, Richard Roos, was seen at the door of his small stone house, which lay close against the tower. His duty it was to kindle and feed the great coal-fire and give signals of alarm if help was required by a vessel in need. He had occupied this post for many a year, and hoped to retain it as long as he lived.

Approaching the edge of the rock, he anxiously scanned for a moment the heavens, then directed his gaze upon the turbulent waves of the sea, which extended boundlessly



before him, blending in the far distance with the horizon. The old man shook his gray head apprehensively as he marked still further prognostications of an imminent tempest.

“Bad enough does it look out there to the north-west,” murmured the warder half aloud. “The sun has gone down in red vapor, and there brews a storm, methinks, that will prove fatal to many a poor mariner this wild and tempestuous night. God have mercy upon their souls! I must spy if perchance a ship is in sight.”

Drawing a telescope from his pocket and adjusting it to his eye, he scanned the horizon slowly and carefully; his tall, gaunt but stalwart form proving that, although Time had left his trace in the honest bronzed face, his vigor and health still remained untouched. Firm and rugged he stood as the rock beneath him, while the old-fashioned dark-blue uniform, with its bright copper buttons, fitting



closely his stalwart martial figure, and the three-cornered hat that covered his gray locks, indicated that in his earlier years he had fought under the banner of his Fatherland. A heavy black mustache, which also had defied the ravages of time, shaded his lips, imparting to him a fierce appearance, mitigated considerably, however, by the kindly blue eye, which, although penetrative and sharp, had also in its clear depths something peculiarly child-like and benevolent. Stern yet gentle, the old warder was loved by all who knew him; the little children of Marstrand feared not his bronzed face and fierce mustache, but gathered confidingly around him as he now and then came down from his rocky height to purchase the little stores necessary for his tower home. Particularly was he a favorite among the youths of the town, who esteemed no favor so great as to be permitted to visit Fortress Karlstein and spend a



full afternoon with the old warder, who would often relate to his eager and attentive listeners stories of his soldier-life under the bold and reckless Charles XII. of Sweden. Numberless were the incidents of the king's bravery, battles and victories, of his stubborn, self-willed obduracy and the manifold misfortunes that befell that head of steel. The old soldier was enthusiastic in describing the courage and daring of his commander and king, and always defended him warmly when others reprobated his reckless and intractable course, although his love of truth would not suffer him to prevaricate or pass by without censure his many failings. "I dare find fault with him," would the old man say, "for I have done so times without number to the 'Invincible' himself, although I must confess, my courage has well-nigh quailed before one glance of his flashing hero eye, for a hero he was: his bitterest enemies admitted this, even



in their defeat and humiliation; only his head of steel! his head of steel! It brought not only upon him, but upon our loved Fatherland, manifold and fearful misfortunes; 'it laid a snare for him in the ground and a trap for him in the way.' Even though I loved him, God forbid that I should justify him. Mark you, boys!" would the old man say; "'hear counsel and receive instruction that you may be wise.' 'He that hath a froward heart findeth no good; the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.'"

Upon the day of which we speak the warder stood upon the edge of the cliff overlooking the boisterous waters. After a long and searching gaze he discovered several far-distant sail, which, like white specks, emerged on the extreme verge of the north sea.

"Poor fellows! poor fellows!" murmured he again; "you will pass a frightful eve, and



a still worse night, I fear. Not one half hour more will pass until a storm-blast will come that will drive you straight upon our dangerous rocks. See! see! it strikes them even now! The ship is driving fast: they take in sail. Brave, watchful mariners, God be with you in this heavy hour!"

"A well-timed wish, father Roos!" said the sonorous voice of a tall, powerful man in colonel's uniform, who, accompanied by a lad, had approached the old man unobserved and heard his fervent prayer. Wheeling quickly around, and stretching himself up to his full height, the warder touched with his right hand his three-cornered hat, and said, respectfully,

"I wish you good evening, Colonel Sparre. What has led you out of the fortress at this hour? I would advise you to beat a hasty retreat, for within a few moments a storm will burst upon us that will not only render



your uniform unfit for service, but will wet you to the skin."

"That were no great mishap, warder," said the colonel, laughing; "nevertheless, I see you are right in your presages, and will not delay, but at once take some special precautions in the harbor. Do you seriously think that the ship we see in the distance is in danger?"

"If He who ruleth the raging of the sea be not with them, colonel," answered the old man, reverently. "You know I understand some little about the weather: my life in yon tower these twenty years has been of some little service to me in this respect. It will be a bad night, and you will do well to order the pilots and fishermen on guard. There! see, the first drops are falling. I would advise you either to take shelter in my room, colonel, or hasten to the protection of the fortress."

"I cannot tarry longer, warder," said Colonel Sparre, the fortress and harbor command-



ant of Marstrand, directing at the same time a last searching look toward the threatening sky, which was now overcast with heavy clouds, while a hollow roaring from the distance and the violent upheaving of the tumultuous waves at the base of the cliff were sure precursors of the rapidly-approaching storm.

"I cannot stay: my post is below, where my precautions and advice are most needed. But my son Olav can remain if you desire it, Roos, and I will send you also one or two lads from the fortress, whom you can employ as adjutants in case it should be necessary to send me a despatch. You can see far more upon this elevation than we in the harbor, and besides, some assistance upon such a night will not prove unwelcome. They can at least carry coal for you to feed the fire. Do you hear, Olav? you stay with Roos, and I will send up to the tower your comrades Elfdal and Rönne. You three, I know, would enjoy

nothing better than a few hours in the lighthouse with the warder."

"And they are heartily welcome by day or by night," said the old man, cordially extending his hand to the young cadet, a youth of some fifteen or sixteen years. "They are brave, manly lads, Colonel Sparre, and your son is not the least among them. But do you stay willingly, Olav?"

"What a question, warder Roos!" cried the boy, pressing the old man's hand with youthful ardor. "We are always glad for any excuse to stay with you, particularly when you tell us about old times; and as in all probability we will have the night before us, and dare not sleep at our post, I hope you will spin us a good long yarn."

"We will see, master Olav, we will see," replied the old warder, gazing kindly and with evident gratification at the young cadet, "but we must have patience until we can



seat ourselves comfortably in the guard-room and our friends Elfdal and Rönne arrive."

"And that must be attended to without further delay," said the colonel, quickly. "Keep vigilant guard, and do not forget, over your yarn-spinning, that the lives of perchance many this night are at stake. Adieu until to-morrow."

After a warm grasp of his son's and the old warder's hand, he went with hasty step toward the harbor. "It is time he had gone," said the sentinel, looking after him: "the storm will soon be upon us; the drops even now are as large as thalers. We must go into the tower, Olav, and kindle the fire: although it is not yet night, it will soon be so dark that the poor mariners over yonder will need all the light we can give them."

The lad lost no time in consideration, for on the instant the windows of heaven were opened, and a deluge of rain poured down

upon them. The sky was suddenly darkened, and the fierce, howling wind swept over the sea as upon the wings of an eagle. The sun had entirely disappeared in the high swelling flood, and only a faint glimmer in the west made known the spot where his red beams had been seen but a moment before.

The warder and Olav ascended the winding stone staircase which led to the great lantern of the tower, and made preparation to kindle the coal-fire. Soon its clear beacon-light spread far out to sea, pouring a lurid glow upon the foaming waves as they dashed with mighty but unavailing fury upon the rocks beneath.

“We have discharged our duty, my lad,” said the old man, as he stirred, with an iron bar, the flames to a still intenser glow; “now we have only to keep our eyes open, and lift up our hearts to Him who can ‘make the storm a calm’ and bring those poor tempest-



tossed mariners to the desired haven. It will not be a hard task to keep up the fire with our supply of coal."

"Particularly if you keep your promise, warder, and tell us stories of your youth," replied Olav.

"No, no, my boy! no yarns upon such a fearful night, when in storm and tempest upon the 'wide, wide sea' hundreds of men's lives are in danger," said Richard Roos, pityingly. "It would be an unseemly thing to jest and laugh while the raging waters thunder against the cliffs at our very feet, and perchance the drowning cry of some poor wretch mingles with the howling and rushing of the fearful blast. No, no! no yarns this night, my lad! I will tell you, instead, what you and your comrades many a time have wished to hear—about—"

"Our king, our hero king, CHARLES!" interrupted Olav, with glee.



“Yes, yes, you have guessed aright, lad,” replied the old soldier as his clear blue eyes gazed musingly into the bright flames, stroking slowly, meanwhile, his thick black mustache. “He was a great man, the king, a bold prince, but, my son, the Holy Book says: ‘He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls;’ and truly my lord the king had a proud and perverse spirit, which at last brought upon his own head and upon that of Sweden bitter defeat and humiliation. Yes, yes! the relation is meet for such a night as this, and you shall hear it. Mighty, proud and impetuous was he as the sea that roars around us, but as dangerous and unapproachable when his perverse will was unchained. The history of our Charles XII. is as strange as that of the fabled knights of the olden times, and methinks I was highly favored to have stood by his side for so



many years. Yes, my lad, you shall hear this night of many incidents that I have not yet told to the youths of Marstrand, and I truly hope that the relation, painful though some of the reminiscences are to me, will teach many a useful lesson that will influence your future lives. How different would it have been with our young prince had he laid to heart the monition of the wise king of Israel!—‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.’ But if I am not much mistaken, there are your comrades, Rönne and Elfdal; at least I heard the door close a moment since, and now I hear steps on the staircase.”

“It is they,” said Olav, after listening intently; “I know the clashing of Elfdal’s sabre, and here they are to answer for themselves.”

“Yes, here we are, and wish you a good-evening,” cried the clear, merry voice of a

young cadet who, accompanied by his friend, stepped upon the platform of the lighthouse. "Most horrible weather! Your father, Olav, must have thought we needed penance, to send us out in such a night. Confusion to such storms and tempests as this, say I!"

"Not so fast, Elfdal," said Olav; "if you talk thus wildly, the warder will show us the door, and to none of us will that be more vexatious than to yourself."

"Ei! my lad, you are right there," replied the frank, impetuous youth, whose dark eyes sparkled from beneath the damp black locks like coals of fire. "I did not mean to offend my old friend Roos. Your hand, warder: you well know I had no such intention, but a night in the tower under these surroundings is certainly no favor."

"Not if Roos has promised us meanwhile a story of old times, of Narva and Bender and the Turks?" said Olav.



“Has he promised that? Then I withdraw all complaints and grumblings. Is that so, warder?”

The old man nodded pleasantly as he said: “Yes, my lad, I intend telling you to-night, God willing, of the king’s youth, of some of the most remarkable incidents of his later life, and of his sad end, which plunged our country into misfortune, misery and ruin. And you will do well to listen earnestly, and profit by the relation, Elfdal, for in you, my lad, there is a goodly portion of willfulness and obstinacy: more than once have I seen you try to run your head through a wall. Pardon an old man for a word of advice, my son, and bear with me while I give you a lesson from the Book of books: ‘Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Wisdom is better than strength;’ and a wiser than Solomon, my lad,

has said: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.'"

"Never mind that now, warder: perhaps I was not so perverse as I seemed," replied the young cadet, blushing with shame. "Youth is not the season for mature virtues."

"But youth should ever strive after that which is noble and excellent, and in all things to be reasonable and docile," said the old mentor; "if Charles had reflected before many a fatal deed which he afterward condemned, many an evil would have been averted, not only from his own head, but from our Fatherland, and Sweden would have been far from least among nations. I myself—but that is of little consequence: still, I will only mention—I myself would not have been seated here for these twenty years lighting the watch-tower beacon if King Charles had only lived a few months, or even weeks, longer. But God willed it so, and I am content. You have



not yet laid aside your mantles, my lads : they are dripping with wet. Suppose we now carry up a good store of coal, to last during the night, and then, if it please you, we will seat ourselves in the guard-room, where we can watch at the same time the beacon and the sea."

"Of the last we will see but little, I am thinking, if we are likely to hear enough, warder," said Rönne; "it is so dark without that one cannot see his own hand before him."

"But the flash of the cannon, if a signal of distress be fired from a ship in danger, can be seen, my boy."

"I see, I see, and confess, besides, that one of us should not dispute with you, warder, if he does not wish to get the worst of it," said Rönne, a little ashamed, in his turn, of his inconsiderate remark.

"That would be something if I should

come off worse with such a saucy young stripling as you," laughingly replied the old man. "But, nevertheless, you are a frank, brave fellow, Rönne, and I can readily pardon an occasional hasty word. But now for the coal, and afterward—"

"For our story, friend Roos," said Olav Sparre: "I, for one, can hardly wait until the time comes for you to begin."

The cadets had now taken off their mantles, hanging them near the fire so that they should dry during the night; then, betaking themselves bravely to work, they rendered efficient aid to the old warder by carrying the heavy buckets of coal up the long winding staircase. When this was at length accomplished they followed him merrily into the guard-room, eager to hear the promised story. Here it was warm and comfortable, and soon a lamp shed its friendly light around them. The lads bestowed themselves as comfortably as possi-



ble upon the large wooden chairs around the oaken table in the centre of the little tower-room, but the vigilant old warder turned his leather-covered arm-chair so that he could look now out upon the sea, anon upon the beacon-fire, whose flame must constantly be fed and kept in glow. Without, the tempest howled, the waves thundered in their wild rage, the rain plashed heavily against the little window of the lighthouse, and starless, deep, dark night lay dismally over land and sea. Within the cozy room it was only so much the more cheery and pleasant, and the warder's youthful guests soon felt quite at home. One long, searching look, his forehead pressed close against the window, the old man cast over the sea, next upon the beacon-fire, that brightly sparkled and glowed in flaming jets; then, after a vigorous clearing of his throat, he began to spin the yarn to which the lads had so eagerly looked forward.



## CHAPTER II.

*COPENHAGEN.—NARVA.—PEACE OF ALTRAN-  
STÄDT.*

“ I MUST tell you, in the first place,” the old soldier began, “ how I was brought under the special notice of the king, so that he considered me afterward worthy of some little confidence.

“ It happened in this wise: when I was a young lad, perhaps some year or two older than you boys are now—for I had passed my sixteenth birth-day—I came to Stockholm and enlisted as a soldier. I could not remain at home; to follow the plough was not the life for me: it pleased me far better to manage a fiery horse or handle a musket and sabre.



My mother was dead: her prayers and tears else had, no doubt, held me back in the village of Dalekarlien; but my father was of sterner stuff, having himself borne arms when he was young, recalling even in his old age those stirring, adventurous times with pleasure. Besides, I knew his mind would be easier did I enter the king's service; his estate was very small—altogether insufficient to support two families—and I had an elder brother who rightly would inherit the little there was to leave in case of his death. My father's love for me caused him considerable solicitude: it grieved him to think that the time would in all probability soon come when I must cross the threshold of the old house a homeless stranger. Upon this account he encouraged rather than repressed my martial disposition, painting in such glowing colors the life of the soldier that my longing to set out for Stockholm and enter upon its



duties and pleasures grew daily stronger and stronger.

“It was upon a bright, beautiful Sunday morning—how well I remember the day!—when my father said to me: ‘My son, if you still seriously desire to be a soldier, we will set out to-morrow for Stockholm. I will take you to my old commander, General Steenbock, and beg of him to say a good word for you. But mark you, Richard, I do not compel you to enter upon this life: it must be entirely of your own free will. You can serve your God, I think, my son, as well in serving your king and defending your Fatherland as in tilling the field and leading the peaceful life of the farmer; only ever bear in mind that the holy Book commands *first*, “fear God” and *then* “honor the king.”’

“‘Yes, father,’ I replied; ‘and you may rest assured that it is not only of my own free will, but it will be gratifying my most



ardent wish, to be a soldier. I can scarcely believe that the time has really come for us to go to Stockholm.'

"Early the following morning, before the sun peeped over the mountain top down into our quiet valley, we were prepared for the journey. My brother Sven accompanied us some little distance upon our way, then, as we bade farewell for the first—and it proved, lads, for the last—time, we lifted up our voices and wept, for we loved each other fondly, as brothers should. But even had I stayed in the valley we could not have remained long together: I would have been compelled to seek service in the house of some farmer, and far rather would I serve my king.

"After bidding Sven good-bye my father and I went rather more sadly upon our way. We reached Stockholm at last, after a tiresome travel, and, receiving the desired information, set out at once for the residence of



General Steenbock. We were admitted to an audience without delay, for my father was announced as a veteran of his old 'Twelfth Infantry.' The general looked at him keenly for a moment, then, his harsh face relaxing into a smile, he cordially extended his hand.

"'Roos, my dear old fellow!' he cried, 'are you still alive? I did not know you at first; time has not dealt kindly with you.'

"'Pardon me, general,' my father replied: 'the same thought about you occurred to me; but although you have not grown younger, I would have known you anywhere. The old stern look, the fierce mustache, the martial bearing, remain unchanged; many a time has that sharp glance made me quail before it, general.'

"The old officer laughed, apparently well pleased with my father's frank words and manner, and good-humoredly added, 'There was always a goodly number of scamps in



the Twelfth among whom it was necessary that discipline should be maintained. But I do remember that you, Roos, were not the worst of the lot—on the contrary, a brave, faithful fellow. I am glad to see you. And now what brings you to Stockholm? Have you a favor to ask of your old officer, my man?’

“‘You have guessed aright, your excellency,’ replied my father. ‘This boy, general—do you think you can make a soldier of him?’

“Without vanity, I may here say, my lads,” said the old man, complacently stroking his mustache, “that I was a right well-favored fellow, of active, powerful limb, health beaming in my bright eyes and rosy, sun-burned cheeks. When my father alluded to me I stepped forward, and stretching myself to my full height, respectfully and modestly, I trust, saluted the general as I had been

taught a soldier should greet his officer. The old man scrutinized me keenly for a moment from head to foot, then, turning to my father, said,

“‘Your son, Roos?’

“‘My flesh and blood, general.’

“‘Good! I have no doubt that something can be made of him. He can stay, and should he conduct himself properly, I promise you a place for him in the body-guard of the Crown Prince. You can leave him without anxiety, my old friend; he shall be well cared for if he acts aright.

“‘Orderly!’ he then called in an authoritative tone, and on the instant a soldier in bright uniform stepped respectfully into the room.

“‘Take this recruit in charge,’ said the general; ‘he enters upon service to-morrow; he is to be well drilled, but at the same time well cared for. Do you understand? And



now, my man,' said he, turning toward me, 'take leave of your father.'

"Although the command was unexpected, I turned at once to obey, for the general's tone did not admit of hesitation. My father grasped my hand, and with one fervent kiss exhorted me in few words to be upright, faithful and brave, adding, as he relinquished my hand, 'Do this, my son, and thou shalt find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.' Saluting the general again, I followed the orderly, and ten minutes later found myself in the barracks, where I was handed over to a subordinate. I never saw my father again, but, lads, his words never left me: I hear his voice even to this very hour still sounding in my ears and in my heart.

"My new life was at first a little harder than I had in my zeal imagined. The uniform was all right, but of the never-ending



drill I soon had enough. Nevertheless, I did my duty, and as I had been well taught by my father from my youth up, I did not experience so much difficulty as most raw recruits, and on that account won favor with the subordinate, who sounded my praises to the general when he kindly inquired about me. Time passed on until I advanced from a recruit to a real soldier; I was enrolled in a company, and must now perform my duties regularly as the rest; this pleased me much better, and my predilection for a soldier's life made all hardships light. I soon won the reputation of being one of the best soldiers in the company, and my neat and orderly appearance called forth commendation and favor from the general.

“One day, after a close and apparently satisfactory inspection, he drew the subordinate aside, speaking with him a short time in an under tone. One hour after I was in-



formed that I could hold myself prepared to enter the body-guard of the Crown Prince Charles. He was at that time only eleven years of age, but I soon saw that he understood as much about military tactics as many an officer who had been for years in the service. His guard was composed of picked men, over whom he had command. He drilled us indefatigably, and knew each one by name. Our service was not an easy one, for the ardent youth allowed us but little time for rest, and besides our other duties we were required to guard the castle and park. We served him willingly, for even at this early age he did not spare himself, and exacted no more from us than from himself. It took no prophet to predict that one day a warrior would spring up fully armed. He did not even live as a prince; his clothing was extremely simple, his uniform only differing from ours in having a slight golden cord



upon the shoulder. His bed was not of eider-down, I can assure you, but an ordinary mattress with a light covering, upon which he slept summer and winter. Good or bad weather mattered but little to him; when drill-hour came we must turn out in rank and file whether the sun shone or whether it rained, if we languished with heat or were almost frozen with cold. Considering all things, he treated us well, and indeed left us no room for complaint, for he shared all our hardships, caring as little for the weather as the oldest veteran in our company. We served him in all love and fidelity, and I truly believe had he commanded we would have gone through fire and through water for his sake.

“You need not smile, my lads; it is no vain boast, for truly I went through water even without his command. It happened in this wise.



“I was on guard one day at the portal of the castle, when the Crown Prince, together with several of his companions, entered the garden to play ball. It was a distinguished company, boys—the young Count Brahe, Count Sture, Oxenstierna and some others, all of the most noble families in the land. I watched them at their game for some time, and to my delight soon saw that the prince was the most dextrous of the number. But upon a sudden Charles threw his ball with such force that it shot far past Count Sture, whose turn it was to catch it, falling into a deep reservoir of water and sinking at once to the bottom. The prince was very angry at the loss of his ball, which he highly prized, while the young count stood confused and annoyed at the want of skill which, he rightly judged, had caused the vexatious accident. ‘You must get me my ball, Sture!’ cried the prince. ‘It is worth more to me than a hun-



dred rix dollars, for my grandmother gave it to me only yesterday. Dive in the water, sir, and bring it up.'

"The poor young count, with heightened color and in great perplexity, stammered: 'I cannot swim, your highness: if I should venture in, I would surely drown.'

"'Drown or not,' said the excited prince, 'I will have my ball, and you let it fall in the reservoir: go in, I tell you, and if you cannot bring it up, one of the others must. You, Brahe, or you, Oxenstierna! I will and I must have my ball.'

"Saying these words, he stamped upon the ground in his rage, looking as fierce as though it would give him the greatest pleasure in the world to swallow them alive. But his comrades did not exhibit the slightest alacrity to venture their lives for the sake of a paltry ball, withdrawing, while he spoke, some steps farther from the reservoir. The



prince looked as if he were about to commit some rash act, and I now considered it time to interfere. I could swim then about as well as a duck, and if I threw off my coat the rest of my uniform could not be much injured; besides, I had marked the spot where the ball sank, and it would be no great feat to recover it.

“‘Pardon me, your Highness,’ said I as I stepped forward; ‘if you will grant me permission to fish up your ball, you shall soon have it.’

“My words restored the interrupted harmony, appeased the anger of the prince and brought back the color to the blanched cheeks of the terrified lads, who had good reason to dread some hot-headed deed upon the part of the excited boy. To my surprise, I received a friendly assent, the prince adding—his manner, even more than his words, expressing his delight—

“‘Bravo, Richard Roos! Can you swim and dive, my man? The reservoir is deep.’

“‘If it were ten fathoms deeper, your Highness should have your ball,’ said I; ‘but you know that I dare not leave my post without orders, and therefore I ask—’

“‘Right, right, my man,’ he interrupted. ‘Sture, you can relieve him. Shoulder his musket, sirrah!’

“The young man, thinking a few moments’ guard not so trying as a bath, complied with considerable alacrity. Drawing off my coat, with one plunge I was in the reservoir. To find the ball, swim to shore and hand it to the prince were but the work of a few moments.

“‘Well done, Roos!’ said he, greatly pleased; ‘you have done me a favor. Take this thaler, my man; and,’ said he, turning toward the young counts, ‘you may now also open your purses, for my brave guard has



saved you an unwelcome bath. If he had not recovered the ball, I would have compelled you to go into the reservoir, as surely as I am Crown Prince of Sweden.'

"The lads could well credit this assertion, for as he made it he put on such a stern face of determination and self-will that I received without one word of objection my four hard thalers. Thanking them for their grace, I drew on my coat, expecting to return to my post, but the prince would not suffer it.

" 'March to your quarters, Roos,' said he, 'and dry your wet clothing.'

" 'But the post, my lord?'

" 'You need not trouble yourself about that: we will take care of it until the relief comes. Count Brahe,' he cried, 'you and Oxenstierna can relieve Sture in turn. I am satisfied with you, Roos. Adieu, until we meet again.'

"The prince thus making himself respon-



sible for my leaving my post, I went to the guard-room and at once reported myself to the officer. He stared in amazement when I described to him the state of the case, and immediately sent a patrol to appoint another guard. But the prince would not allow it, saying that the young counts should honestly serve out my time. From that hour I stood in his favor. Many a time when off duty I was ordered to his presence, and as I had some little gift at that time in telling yarns, as you lads call it, this faculty was often in requisition. He was generally good-humored, but sometimes, when overtaken by one of his headstrong, obstinate fits, he acted as though he were actually bereft of his senses. Had it not been for this fatal blemish in his character, which it grieves me to say he retained throughout his life, he would have been not only one of the boldest but greatest monarchs Europe ever saw; but ah, my lads,



he had unfortunately 'no rule over his own spirit;' he lacked true wisdom, with all his royalty, wealth and power. Pardon an old man, boys, and suffer him just here to read a lesson from Holy Writ which it will be well for you seriously to ponder. It will not take us long." Saying this, the old warder drew toward him the well-worn Bible which ever lay upon his little table in the guard-room, and, opening it, read slowly and impressively these words:

"Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?

"Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.

"The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me.

"It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.

"It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.



“The gold and the crystal cannot equal it; and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.

“No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.

“The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

“Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?

“Behold *the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom*, and to depart from evil is understanding.”

The old man paused, and for a few moments gazed sadly and retrospectively into the glowing flames, then passing his hand suddenly over his broad forehead, and clearing his throat vigorously, resumed his narration.

“As I was saying, boys,” he recommenced, “the prince had not learned to rule his own spirit. I was witness upon one occasion of a contention he had, when quite young,



with his grandmother, the queen-dowager, Eleonora, although he generally treated the honorable lady with marked respect. But it was upon one of his hot-headed, obstinate days, and there was but little use at such times in attempting to restrain him. He wore the uniform of his body-guard, and as my post for the time was at his door, I could not help seeing and hearing all that took place. He was just in the mood to pick a quarrel with any one who opposed him. A lackey who had unintentionally committed some trifling blunder he rated soundly, pitching him headlong from the door; as he did so he cast upon me a fierce side-look, but I stood at my post with a face of stone, apparently taking no notice of aught that transpired. Accordingly, I felt secure in my indifference. My uniform was in trim, my musket bright, in short, all was orderly; he could not possibly, I thought, find fault with me, even if he wished



to do so. The queen-dowager at this unlucky moment chanced to enter the room, and like a bird of prey he pounced upon her, glad to find some one upon whom to vent his ill-humor.

“‘My coat is black, is it not, grandmother?’ said he, fiercely, to the lady.

“‘Oh no, my child,’ she gently answered; ‘it is a decided blue.’

“‘It is black,’ cried the little savage.

“‘It is certainly blue,’ repeated the lady.

“‘I say it is black, black!’ cried the prince, stamping in his anger upon the floor, and making such a din that all in the castle could hear. The queen-dowager must actually at last give up, right or wrong, and acknowledge the coat to be black, although it was as blue as the sky.

“Now, thought I to myself, if you were not a prince, my lad, you would get a sound thrashing with this ramrod. But I guarded myself cautiously to prevent my thoughts



from being seen, for I can assure you that it did not do to joke with him when in one of these self-willed, obstinate humors. He could not help feeling conscious, however, that I did not approve of his conduct, for casting upon me suddenly a heathenish look, he roared out:

“ ‘You tell me, Roos: is my coat black or blue?’

“ ‘Pardon me,’ I replied, hoping by discretion to escape safely out of the affair; ‘no guard under arms, as your Grace is aware, dare have an opinion.’

“ ‘But I command, and you shall answer!’ cried he, with a look that foreboded nothing of good: ‘black or blue?’

“His menacing manner provoked me; nothing would have induced me to yield to the young barbarian; and without taking a moment for reflection, I answered, ‘Black, your Highness! *Black as a corn-flower!*’\* ”

\* A flower of a peculiarly brilliant *blue* color.



“I had hit it. At first he pricked up his ears, then laughed aloud, his fit of anger over for that time at least. ‘You artful knave!’ cried he, in the best humor in the world. ‘You are a bold fellow, Roos; had you taken a different course, it would have been all over between us. You have pleased me as well as you did at the reservoir.’

“‘That is fortunate for me, prince,’ I replied; ‘but I do not think it generous to put any one to the test in this manner, particularly a poor soldier who dare not contradict your Grace upon any consideration.’

“‘You are right, fellow. I acknowledge it, and will remember it in the future.’ Then extending his hand in the most courteous manner to the queen-dowager, he led her like a gallant cavalier to her room.

“So was he ever, violent, impetuous, obstinate and iron-headed when opposed, and, again, to be wound around one’s finger if only man-



aged with wisdom and discretion. His was a most singular disposition, and he retained it until the close of his life.

“But I must take time to tell you of another of his mad freaks. It was in the very midst of winter, and most fearfully cold, when it suddenly occurred to him one day that he would take a ride. ‘You can come along,’ he called to me in passing; and as I considered this invitation a command, I prepared to obey, although it was not very agreeable upon such a day. His sleigh soon being brought out, he sprang in, taking the reins, while I, whip in hand, bestowed myself, according to orders, upon the back seat; two mounted postilions followed, and with ringing of bells and cracking of whip we drove through the streets, making some excitement upon that still, cold day. We proceeded for some distance without encountering any obstacle, excepting the severity of the weather, until on a



sudden the horse stopped before a low wall which the prince had not observed, as it was completely covered with snow, positively refusing to advance farther. Charles whipped and shouted in vain, for the horse was wiser than he. Seeing one of the postilions exhibit some mischievous enjoyment at this obstacle, which he supposed was too hard a nut for even the iron head of the crown-prince to crack, he shouted :

“ ‘ Dismount, you lazy rascals, and pull the wall down ! You shall not have the satisfaction of boasting that Charles was compelled to alter his course for a paltry wall. Down with you, knaves ! ’

“ The poor fellows did not anticipate such a command—which was no pleasant one, I can assure you, upon that bitter day—but all they had to do was to obey, my office being meantime to hold their horses. After some hard work it was accomplished, and



Charles had the pleasure and satisfaction of driving straight on his course. His head of steel, for this time at least, successfully ran through the wall.

“Similar extravagant pranks he was often guilty of, proving conclusively, I think, that his head was not formed of ordinary stuff. I do not tell these incidents in his praise, my lads, but I wish especially to show you that, had this inflexible will been rightly directed, it might have accomplished great good. His tutor, upon many occasions, was sorely tried with him : for instance, he would not study his Latin grammar. Finding that rational persuasions did not avail, the tutor gave up, saying, ‘Very well, your Highness. I am perfectly satisfied that you should not learn, but you certainly cannot expect to be numbered among the great monarchs of the world. However, I suppose that is a matter of indifference to you.’



“‘What do you mean?’ asked the prince, indignantly. ‘What I mean,’ replied his instructor, ‘is very apparent: every great monarch understands Latin; even your neighbor, the king of Denmark, is fluent in that language.’

“‘What others have learned I can and will learn,’ said he; ‘hand me the grammar.’ And from that hour he studied with a diligence and perseverance that were at least as iron-like as his head. The French language was also mastered by him in the same manner. Arouse his ambition, and you could do as you pleased with him.

“A martial spirit animated him even at this early age; he studied history with avidity, and dearly loved to read of Alexander and Cæsar, ‘proposing those two heroes as his models in all but their vices.’ I myself heard him say, upon one occasion, to the queen-dowager, that he would willingly live only



thirty years to win the renown Alexander had gained.

“General Steenbock—the same through whose influence I was appointed one of the prince’s body-guard—had observed and encouraged in him this martial spirit; he won high favor with the lad by presenting him with twenty-four miniature cannon, with ammunition, wagons, and all belonging thereto. I was on guard before his door when this present was received; my musket was at once ordered to the corner, and I was forthwith required to assist in the new game. When the lance corporal made his rounds he looked anything but pleased to see my post deserted, but the prince used little ceremony with him.

“‘What Roos has done has been by my special order,’ he cried. ‘Leave us, sirrah, this instant.’

“This was now his favorite sport, and many



a time was my service required in cleaning, loading and shooting, until he became so expert that even at that early age he could have vied with any cannoneer in the land. But I have not time to give you any more incidents of Charles' youth. It might have been very different for him had he not lost his father so early in life: the king died when the Crown Prince was only fifteen years old. According to the law of the empire, he would have been eligible to the throne even at this early age, but his father, knowing his perverse, intractable spirit, provided in his will that he should be under the guardianship of the queen-dowager—who had also governed the kingdom under the minority of the late king—until his eighteenth year, the administration being lodged in her hands, together with five senators. The prince was highly indignant at this order, but as he truly loved and revered his grandmother, he submitted obedi-



ently a whole year, and perhaps would have been content for a longer period had not the smouldering sparks been fanned by another. On one occasion, upon reviewing some regiments, he sunk so deep in thought that the senator Piper, who rode by his side, earnestly inquired what so completely engrossed the mind of his Majesty.

“‘I am thinking,’ replied the prince, rousing from his reverie—‘I am thinking that I am capable of commanding those brave fellows, and I do not choose that either they or I should receive orders from a woman.’

“‘If your Majesty,’ said Count Piper, ‘will grant me unlimited authority, within three days, my head being the forfeit, you will be called to be sovereign king.’ The desire of the prince being communicated by the senators to the queen-regent, they were by her referred to the States: there all were agreed, and the queen, finding that opposition would



be vain, resigned her power with a good grace. The prince 'was invested with absolute authority in three days after he had expressed his desire of reigning alone.' After the archbishop Swebilius had anointed him, according to custom, and was about to set the crown upon his head, with his wonted perverseness Charles seized it from his hands and placed it upon his own head. Now he was truly king, and the world soon saw that he was not a straw puppet, to be pulled about at pleasure by invisible wires behind the scenes. He had hitherto troubled himself but little about state affairs; to be sure, he was occasionally present at the council of the empire, but had always gone with no good intent, I fear—only to irritate and deride the senators. On this account he was thought to be of but mean capacity; 'but the difficulties that gathered around him soon afforded him an opportunity of displaying his real charac-



ter.' The foreign powers also, presuming on his youth and inexperience, thought they could take from him, without great danger, a good slice of his kingdom. Russia, Poland and Denmark, almost at the same time, conspired his ruin, throwing the Swedish council thereby into considerable dismay and perplexity.

They were at once for averting the storm by negotiations, but the young king, who fortunately was upon this occasion in their midst, upon these propositions sprang to his feet, and with a dignity that well became him, and astonished them, uttered these words :

“‘My lords, I am resolved never to begin an unjust war, nor ever to finish a just one but by the destruction of my enemies. My resolution is fixed : I will attack the first that shall declare against me, and after having conquered him, I hope I shall be able to strike terror into the rest.’



“With these words he left them, and the old counselors sat there surprised and confounded.

“It was soon shown that these were no vain boastings of the youthful prince. He was bear-hunting (a sport he greatly enjoyed) when a courier brought him the news that Augustus of Saxony had invaded Livonia, and that at the same time the king of Denmark had entered the territories of the duke of Holstein. In one moment he was fire and flame; the chase was no more thought of; and after a short consultation, he resolved to send a considerable body of troops to the duke’s assistance. Before their arrival, however, ‘the Danes had ravaged the country, taken the castle of Gottorp, and laid siege to Tönningen.’ The King of Denmark was assisted by Saxony, Brandenburg and Hesse-Cassel. England and Holland joined Charles against the confederacy, sending fleets to the



Baltic; an equitable termination of the war was proposed, but the king of Denmark, despising the youthful king of Sweden, haughtily refused. We soldiers now received orders to embark, and on the 8th of May, 1700, Charles, under the conduct of a countless multitude, who followed him to the harbor amidst tears and shouts of admiration, left his beautiful capital, to which he never returned.

“But we dreamed naught of this then, my lads: we set out with good courage and high hopes, glad to meet with the enemy who had treated our Fatherland and our young monarch with such haughty disdain. Our cause was just and we were favored by heaven. The fleet of the allies was defeated, and, having reached Copenhagen, we, together with some English and Holland ships, proceeded at once to invest it by sea and by land. The Danes were not a little frightened by our boldness. The king left his ship-of-war at



the head of his grenadiers, and entered a sloop in order the easier to reach shore. This was accomplished at last under a hot storm of bullets which greeted us from the Danish side. What I now tell you I saw myself, for as the king entered the sloop, I was, I can assure you, lads, not very far in the rear. Close beside him was the French ambassador, Count de Guiscard, a brave man, loyal and true to Sweden. I stood just behind him, so near to the king that I could have touched him with my outstretched hand: not one word that he exchanged with his attendants was lost upon me.

“In the first excitement, Charles took but little notice by whom he was followed, and with some surprise he now saw *Guiscard*.

“‘Ha, my lord ambassador!’ he exclaimed. ‘You have no quarrel with the Danes: you need go no farther, if you please.’

“‘Sir, the king, my master,’ replied the



brave man, 'has ordered me to attend your majesty. I hope you will not this day banish me from your court, which never before appeared so splendid.'

"Charles smiled, but answered never a word. In my ardor and admiration I could have embraced the noble man: that one expression had won my heart.

"Meanwhile, as we drew near shore we found the water so shallow that our progress was necessarily slow; indeed, at times we feared we would ground. I noticed that the king's impatience was almost consuming him, and thought within myself that this state of things would not last much longer, and I was right. When some three hundred paces from shore, Charles, suddenly unsheathing his sword and springing into the sea, cried aloud,

"'Let every bold Swede follow his king,' and on the instant we grenadiers, nothing



loth, sprang after him, wading to shore, while the entrenched Danes greeted us with scores of blue beans.

“‘What whistles so shrilly?’ I heard the king inquire of Major Stuart, who stood next to him.

“‘It is the noise of the musket-balls which they fire upon your majesty,’ he replied.

“‘Very well,’ said the king; ‘that for the future shall be the music of my life.’

“Scarcely had the last words passed his lips when a ball struck the major on the shoulder, while the lieutenant at the other side of the king fell dead at his feet. On the instant I sprang to the major’s assistance, and could not resist looking into the face of the king to see what he thought of this affair, which was no joke, I can assure you, boys. His eyes flashed, and the whistling bullets apparently troubled him as little as though they had been so many sugar-



plums. He enjoyed thoroughly the excitement of the danger.

“Seeing me he cried, ‘Roos, support the major. Forward, my noble Swedes! The sooner we reach the shore, the sooner will we drive the enemy out of their entrenchments!’

“And forward we went as to a dance. When they saw us so dauntlessly advancing, they took to their heels; the king mounted the trenches, the soldiers following after; and now we were masters of the flat land, and had Copenhagen pretty securely within our grasp. Encamping, we made preparations at once for the bombardment of the city. But it did not go that far: the town, fearing its destruction, sent deputies to the king entreating him to spare them. Charles, being neither inhuman nor bloodthirsty, and hoping besides to effect some advantageous arrangement, changed his design and gave them the prom-



ise that he would desist from the bombardment, but that he would require, instead, the sum of four hundred thousand rix dollars. This demand was at once complied with, contributing not a little toward the expenses of the war. The stipulation was made at the same time that they should regularly supply our army with provisions, which the king expressly ordered should be honestly paid for.

“ This last requisition was a little too much for the deputies, but our king was victor, and nothing was left them but to obey. Provisions were accordingly brought into camp in great wagons, and, to the surprise of the Danes, we Swedes paid so honestly and honorably that the result was, the farmers preferred bringing their produce into camp to carrying it into the city, so that even the citizens were obliged to purchase a portion of their supplies from us.



“That was Swedish military discipline, my lads.

“Many, to be sure, would have taken the provisions and kept the money in their pockets, but the king’s command was peremptory, and each one was well aware that any violation of the order would be followed by instant and condign punishment. In such matters Charles XII. did not joke, boys: he was truly a great disciplinarian.

“The king of Denmark soon saw the necessity of either doing justice to the duke of Holstein or having his capital destroyed. The arrangements were made, ‘and a treaty was concluded in less than two weeks upon much the same terms as formerly.’ Thus was Charles’ first war at an end. Think you not, lads, that he could say, as well as Julius Cæsar, *Veni, vidi, vici?*

“And now the king turned his attention toward the other princes who had threatened



him, and concluded to lead us first against Augustus of Saxony; but on his way he heard that a more formidable enemy than either he or the Danes, namely, Peter, czar of Russia, had laid siege to the Swedish fortress, Narva, with not less than eighty thousand men. But the number of the enemy made little difference to our bold young king; and although it was the depth of winter, and the Baltic scarcely navigable, he wasted no time in leading us against the Russians. When Peter heard that we were marching against him, he feared that his army of eighty thousand was not strong enough to cope with us handful of Swedes, and set out to hasten the march of a reinforcement of forty thousand troops, which were on their way from the interior of Russia. The command before Narva he delivered meantime to his general, the Duke de Croy.

“It would have been certainly no great



affair had the duke without ceremony, with an army of eighty thousand men and one hundred and forty-five cannon, taken so inconsiderable a fortress as Narva, defended only by two thousand Swedes. But it had a brave governor, Count Horn, who had defended Narva boldly as a lion for more than two months. It was a point of honor for King Charles to succor his faithful general in his extremity, while upon the other side it depended upon Croy to keep us as far as practicable from the fortress. 'The czar had thrown every possible obstruction in our way: thirty thousand men were posted in a defile on the road to oppose our passage, this corps being sustained by a body of twenty thousand Strelitz, posted some leagues nearer Narva; so that before we could reach the camp we must force our way through an army of nearly sixty thousand men.

"That was a hard nut, my lads, and re-



quired truly hard teeth to crack it. But Charles could bite well—that he had shown us before Copenhagen—and we soldiers would have followed wherever he might have led, so great was the confidence with which he had inspired us.

“We were only twenty thousand strong in Livonia, but Charles was much too impatient to hold back with his army. With four thousand foot and an equal number of horse, he set out in hasty march, leaving the rest to follow at their leisure. With eight thousand men did he march against eighty thousand, who were strongly entrenched. Ten Russians to every Swede! Well might it be called a bold, reckless deed! We soldiers, and especially those composing the body-guard, did not ask after the number of the enemy: the king in our eyes was a host in himself; but the officers—and I remember in particular an old Swedish general—expressed their doubts



about the result of such a mad act. Charles, hearing the old man's demurs, rode up to him, and eyeing him sharply, said, 'Do you doubt, sir, that I will be able to beat eighty thousand Russians with eight thousand Swedes?' The general answered as well as he possibly could under the circumstances: 'Your Majesty sustained yourself well before Copenhagen, and with God there is nothing impossible.'

"'I can at once convince you that I am right,' continued Charles. 'You can see that I at least possess two advantages over the enemy: one is, that he will not be able to use his cavalry, and the other, that the enormous number of men will only be a hindrance rather than a help in the narrow defile.'

"At the same time another officer took part gratuitously in the conversation, and in order to gain favor with the king, said, 'With your Majesty's permission, I will remark that a great French general under whom I formerly



served was wont to say before each battle, If the Lord remain neutral, we will certainly gain the victory.'

"But the malapert received an unexpected rebuke. He had not thought that the king had the fear of God before his eyes, and was some little astonished at the answer Charles returned. Looking at him askant, the king rejoined, curtly, 'If you wish my opinion, sir, I have only to say that your great general spoke like a great fool.' With these words he turned his back upon him and rode from the spot. The discomfited Frenchman looked after him so completely browbeaten that we grenadiers could not restrain a quiet laugh at his expense.

"Meanwhile, we pressed forward. The first Russian post had possessed themselves, as I said before, of a narrow defile on the road, where a few hundred men could easily have barred the progress of a large army; but



from the celerity and valor of our unexpected attack the Russians retreated in confusion, the disorganized mass in their wild flight alarming in turn the corps of twenty thousand troops posted some leagues nearer Narva, who in their turn, supposing all was lost, rolled along in one resistless stream.

“Our king had no further difficulty in pushing his way, but the worst was now to come. Just before us was the camp, strongly fortified by redoubts, one hundred and fifty cannon opening upon us their gaping mouths, and defended by an army of eighty thousand men. Our breath was spent, but the king only gave us time for a few gasps and to wipe the sweat from our hot brows, when he suddenly pressed forward, and sounding his battle-cry, ‘God with us!’ rushed upon the enemy. So speedy and violent was our attack that in three hours the entrenchments were carried.



“Charles did not leave us now much time for thought: so soon as our ordnance had effected some breaches in the enemy’s entrenchments, he ordered us to force our way through with fixed bayonets.

“I can tell you, lads, it was a solemn moment when that step was taken, for if God had not helped us, none of our little band would ever have come out alive. Our cause was just: God did not forsake us, but ‘girded us with strength unto the battle.’ A fearful storm of snow came down from heaven (it was now the 30th of November, 1700, and winter had set in early); the sharp, cold flakes and bitter, icy wind, driving in the faces of the enemy, disabled and rendered them unfit for service: the storm was upon our backs, and affected us but little.

“I must confess that the Russians stood their ground boldly. They could not see our small number, and might well imagine that



it was stronger than it in reality was. The king fought like an old general, displaying here at least a prudence, judgment and intrepidity which amazed us and animated us with an intense desire to conquer. As he flew from wing to wing, wherever the battle raged fiercest, a shot grazed his shoulder. I saw him wince, but a bandage was bound below the wound to stop the bleeding, and he troubled himself no further about it. Scarcely had he again pressed into the midst of the fire when his horse was shot dead under him. He paid as little attention to this mishap as to the wound, and, gathering himself up, mounted another, but a cannon-ball struck this second horse also. For the third time he pressed on, saying coolly as he did so: 'These fellows find me exercise.' Not a thought did he apparently bestow upon the danger in which he stood, leading us ever deeper and deeper into the enemy's midst, until on a



sudden his horse fell into a morass: he extricated himself quickly, but one of his boots he left in the mud and mire. I was near enough to render him some little assistance, and, seeing the accident, drew my boot off, and handing it to him, said,

“ ‘Here, your Majesty, is another.’ ”

“ ‘Thank you, Roos,’ he cried, hoarsely, for the powder and shouting had affected his voice; ‘there is no time for that;’ and, springing nimbly on his horse, fought in stocking and boot as indifferently and indefatigably as though nothing special had happened.

“After three hours, three mortal hours, lads—their memory will never pass away while life remains—we carried the entrenchments, as I said before. The king, with the four thousand men that composed the wing he commanded in person, pursued the flying army of fifty thousand Russians to the river Narva, then the ‘demoralized mass rushed



wildly upon the bridge, which broke down,' and the poor fugitives that were not precipitated into the cold, icy stream were obliged to return in despair to their camp, which as yet stood firm. But few, however, reached it. Charles, I am proud to say, acted very humanely; he detained only the most distinguished officers, dismissing without ceremony the unarmed subalterns and soldiers after we reached Narva. Our king behaved with the greatest generosity to the conquered. It pleases me well, boys, to dwell upon this battle and upon the humanity Charles exhibited: how we Swedes loved and honored him for it! But I must continue: in the excitement and haste, they counseled what should be done with the prisoners. One of the generals proposed that they should be put to the sword: this roused the indignation of the king; he rebuked him sternly, and ordered instead that the poor exhausted creatures should, as far as



practicable, be provided with food and drink. After he had restored to them their liberty, he ordered his adjutant, Baumann, to read in the presence of the general who had made the inhuman proposition the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and at its close added himself these words: 'Mark well, general! if the Lord has forgiven us ten thousand pounds, we may well afford to give to our fellow-servants an hundred groschen.' You would do well, lads, to read and ponder the beautiful lessons that our blessed Lord has given us in that chapter.

"Although Charles failed to obey many of the teachings of that Holy Book, he nevertheless prized it highly: often have I seen him reading its sacred pages. What a king he would have been, lads, could he only have governed his own spirit! but his head of steel! his head of steel! As I said, 'it laid a snare for him in the ground and a trap for



him in the way.'” The old man paused in his narration, and for a few moments gazed abstractedly into the glowing flames of the beacon-fire, then with a heavy sigh continued his story :

“ Meantime, it had become dark, and the king, wrapping his mantle around him, laid himself down upon the ground, the fresh-fallen snow his bed and the clouded sky his canopy. His dreams could not have been of the pleasantest, for, notwithstanding our victorious day, he knew that the right wing of the enemy still held firm, and was strong enough to defeat our handful of Swedes, if it were God’s will. But the clemency and generosity of our king brought now their own reward. Our Saviour has said : ‘ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy ;’ and we proved its truth at this time, lads. During the night, about two o’clock, General Vede, who commanded the right wing of the



Russians, knowing of the clemency with which Charles had treated his prisoners, offered his surrender to the young hero under similar stipulations, the king's answer being that his only requisition was that the general should appear before him at the head of his troops, laying down their standards and arms. And this actually was done; thirty thousand Russian officers and men marched through our ranks with uncovered heads, and laid down their arms and standards at the feet of our king, Charles XII. of Sweden. Our whole army of seven thousand men (one thousand had perished in the struggle) stood in line, not a little proud of the result which we had won through God's good help and the invincible bravery of our young monarch. Again Charles dismissed the unarmed soldiers and retained only the officers.

“The Czar was meantime advancing with his forty thousand men when he received



news of the total defeat of his army; but he was truly a great man, and although chagrined, as you may well suppose, bore the humiliation with manly fortitude, and comforted himself with the hope 'that the Swedes would in time teach the Russians to beat them.'

"It had not taken us long to accomplish all this, and to this very day the battle of Narva is a sore point with the Russians. Even after they had recovered from their defeat they could not comprehend how we eight thousand Swedes had put to flight an army of eighty thousand men. Many firmly believed it was the effect of witchcraft, and asserted that we had dealings with evil spirits, and that our king through this agency was proof against ball, blow and thrust. Sorcery, indeed! Our help was from God in heaven and the prowess of our king.

"All was regulated at that time, lads, by line and plummet. After we had beaten the



Danes and Russians in 1703, we gained a victory over the Saxon Polish king, and set Stanislaus Leszcynski on the throne of Poland in his stead, extorting, at the same time, a peace which promised great advantages to Sweden.

“Now was Charles’ glory at its height: the whole world feared and honored him; our army was counted the best in Europe, and truly it could not have been exceeded for discipline, bravery and the most unbounded confidence in its leader. Then, too, all were surprised at the ‘disinterestedness of the conqueror, who, strange to say, had not demanded one inch of ground for his own glory or for that of his realm.’

“It was about this same time that he obliged the emperor of Germany to extend protection to the Protestants in Silesia—another noble deed, my lads, and well worthy of praise. The souls of them that were slain



for the word of God and for the testimony which they held had cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' and God heard and sent deliverance. 'The king stipulated that the Lutherans should be allowed full liberty of conscience; the emperor dared not refuse, and upward of one hundred churches were given to them where God could be worshiped in purity and in truth. When the pope's inter-nuncio reproached the emperor for these concessions, saying that 'it was a most shameful condescension for a Catholic emperor like him to sacrifice the interest of his own religion to that of heretics,' he replied, with a smile, 'You may think yourself very happy that the king of Sweden did not propose to make *me* a Lutheran; for if he had, I do not know what I might have done.' All circumstances seemed to combine to weave



an imperishable crown for the brow of our king. Ah, boys, 'the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.' A change came, and the bright effulgence of this glorious star began to pale until its beams were extinguished in the dark night of death. The days of rejoicing had passed, and now came the long night of gloom and desolation, the very enemy whom we had defeated at Narva being now our troubler.

"Far better had it been for the king and Sweden had a peace at this time been concluded. Charles imagined that he could dethrone the czar as readily as he had Augustus of Saxony (surnamed the Strong), but he failed. Peter, though not called 'the Strong,' proved to us that his talons and pinions had grown mightily since the battle of Narva.

"But I must hasten. I would willingly stop here, lads, for from this time dates all



our misfortune and trouble. I bear about me to this very day an unpleasant remembrance of those evil times, for I received such a blow upon my skull from a Russian sabre that I will carry the scar to the day of my death. I must confess that the Russians fought bravely. My wound, however, was but a trifling consideration : my life was spared by the mercy of God ; but this battle almost cost the king his crown and kingdom.

“But I am going on too fast, lads, and must retrace my steps.

“We remained one year in Saxony at the expense of the elector, and Charles had meanwhile not only gathered considerable treasure, but had reinforced his army with some twenty thousand men. About this time it was when we received orders for a general move. At first we were heartily glad, for we expected without doubt that we would march direct for Sweden, which we had not seen



for so many long years, but we were not yet to see our Fatherland. Instead of marching north we returned to Poland, and found we were again to cope with our old enemy, the Russians, and we had not long to wait until we met in hot conflict. Near the Dnieper we encountered a body of twenty thousand grenadiers and nine regiments of cavalry, under Prince Mentchikof, prepared to make a vigorous resistance and hinder our march. To conquer seemed out of the reach of human power: before them lay a swollen river and great morass; their flanks were protected by vast forests. Our generals counseled that we should build pontoons and erect batteries, but Charles protested against all this ceremony, and, recklessly plunging into the raging stream, forced his way across, the guards and the rest of the army after him, for the motto of Swedes has ever been, 'Follow our king.' Breast high we stemmed the flood, and



attacked their redoubt with vigor. The Russians stood as a wall; six times we were repulsed, the seventh we were successful: the enemy fled, leaving in our hands eight thousand prisoners and thirty-six pieces of ordnance.

“This victory only made the king haughty and arrogant. We are warned in the Holy Book, lads, that a ‘haughty spirit goeth before a fall;’ ‘every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished;’ but, alas! his heart was lifted up, and he ‘forgot the works of God and his wonders that he had showed him, though he had commanded the clouds from above and opened the doors of heaven.’ He could at this time have effected an honorable peace, but he returned the proud answer: ‘I will treat with the czar at Moscow.’ This being reported to Peter, he replied: ‘My brother Charles affects

to play Alexander, but he will not find in me a Darius.'

"He was not disappointed. But we must defer our relation until we make the beacon-fire somewhat brighter than it now is: the flames begin to glow faintly, boys, while the tempest without howls still fiercer than before."

The interruption was not agreeable, but the cadets, accustomed to prompt obedience, started to their feet, rendering the requisite assistance to the old warder.







### CHAPTER III.

#### *POLTAVA AND BENDER.*

AND now the clear, bright glow gleamed anew far over the sea, and the old warder and his youthful guests, their duty conscientiously discharged, disposed themselves as before around the oaken table and resumed the interrupted narration. One last searching look the old man cast into the stormy night, listening meanwhile intently if perchance he could distinguish amid the howling of the blast and the deep roaring of the sea the dreaded signal of distress. But no sound met his ear save the fearful tumult of the unchained elements. Seating himself tranquilly, therefore, in his old arm-



chair, after a short pause and the vigorous clearing of the throat, he again began :

“Where was I, lads? Ah, yes, yes, I remember: I was just telling you about the czar’s propositions of peace, which were rejected by Charles with such disdain—a fatal error upon his part, for he could have made at this time the most advantageous stipulations without trusting to the uncertain fortune of war; but upon war he was obstinately bent, and no persuasions could induce him to change his resolve.

“Perchance things would have been different could we have marched direct to Moscow, but the intensely cold weather was coming on, and the czar had meanwhile rendered the roads almost impassable. Then, too, beyond all else, ‘Mazeppa, chief of the Ukraine, anxious to shake off the yoke of Russia and make himself independent master of that nation,’ sent to the king an embassy which



was instructed to enter into a treaty, promising to assist him in his daring project of deposing the czar, offering to place at his disposal at least thirty thousand men, 'large stores of provision and ammunition, together with all his treasure, which was immense.' Accordingly, we marched to the Ukraine, hoping to obtain what we at this time so greatly needed—food, money and clothing. These were certainly great inducements, for we were in truth far from being in the same condition as when we left the rich fields of Saxony. The march, the battle, the bivouac, with all the other hardships of war, had done their work. We looked like a horde of beggars, or savages rather, for we supplied our deficiencies of clothing, as far as practicable, with the skins of wild animals. But under all these untoward circumstances we preserved our courage and vigor: our eyes were fixed upon the promised land of the Ukraine, where



we should enjoy the many and rich blessings in store for us. We were also expecting supplies of men and provision at the hands of General Löwenhaupt from Poland.

“But ah, boys, we were grievously disappointed. Hungry and almost naked, we had to encounter the greatest difficulties. Like the Israelites, we wandered through a wilderness: it was filled with marshy forests. Four days were we in this sorrowful plight, leaving the greater part of our artillery imbedded in its horrible bogs. To complete our misfortunes, we found we had lost our way. After encountering almost incredible hardships and obstacles during twelve long days, we at last reached the banks of the Desna; here we confidently expected to meet Mazeppa with his longed-for supplies. A new disappointment, however, awaited us; instead of the Cossack, we found an army of Russians prepared to dispute our farther progress.



“What was now to be done? To return was impossible. Our army was spent and almost famished. We must conquer or die. Upon the last alternative Charles thought but little. It was truly a desperate encounter, and we reaped in the end but little benefit therefrom. The czar had meanwhile discovered the faithlessness and designs of Mazepa, ‘defeated and dispersed his adherents, laid his towns in ashes,’ and taken all the supplies collected for our troops. After we had beaten the Russian army Mazeppa made his appearance, but instead of bringing with him thirty thousand men, as he had promised, he had difficulty in collecting about six thousand Cossacks in as pitiable a condition as ourselves. The old fellow had done his utmost, to be sure, but the Russians had been too quick for him, and his ambitious designs had been nipped in the bud.

“Our last hope lay now upon General



Löwenhaupt, to whom Charles had sent orders to meet him upon entering the Ukraine with fifteen thousand Swedes and a large supply of provisions. But Peter lay in wait upon the Russian border with forty thousand troops, and fell upon him as soon as he made his appearance. He was soon obliged to retreat, and they continued their march, with the czar close upon their heels, through a marshy country where the roads had been rendered almost impassable by deep ditches and barriers of fallen trees. Peter had now gained his object. When the brave general was completely ensnared, he was the second time attacked by the entire army, but our Swedes struggled with the might of despair: the Russians were routed and upon the point of being totally defeated when the czar, springing to the rear-guard, gave orders to the Cossacks to fire upon all who fled. 'Even kill



me (said he) should I be so cowardly as to turn my back.'

"His example inspired them with fresh courage. Like a swarm of bees they gathered around the Swedish battalion and the provision wagons, which last they longed to plunder, but Peter again gave orders 'that if any so much as laid their hands upon the wagons they should be shot.' The conflict was renewed with vigor, and lasted without intermission until four o'clock in the afternoon, when General Bayer led up a strong reinforcement of Russian troops. 'The Swedes now took possession of an advantageous post,' using their wagons as a sort of rampart. At early dawn the following morning the battle was renewed, and Löwenhaupt, seeing the impossibility of saving the baggage, gave orders that it should be set on fire to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy. The flames, however, did not spread quickly



enough, for the Russians succeeded in securing the greater part of the supplies that were intended for our exhausted and famished troops. An honorable capitulation was offered to General Löwenhaupt, but he refused it with disdain, and a third time was the battle renewed with the same spirit as before. Our friends reached us at last, covered with renown, to be sure, but in a most forlorn condition, and without the supplies in which lay our last help and hope.

“Instead of proving an assistance to us, they were only another hindrance in our path. With the addition of Löwenhaupt’s dispirited troops and Mazeppa’s defeated Cossacks, we only numbered about twenty-eight thousand men—to cope with the enemy much too few, and for our limited supply of provision much too many. We were now as securely caught as a mouse in the trap.

“Until this time, lads, we Swedes had scarce-



ly murmured, but general dissatisfaction began to manifest itself. To fight the Russians was not so bad, but now we had to contend with hunger and cold. One of my comrades, who from youth up had been accustomed to a good table, dared to remonstrate with the king about the food, showing him at the same time a piece of our black, mouldy bread, which was made of oats and barley, asking him if such food was fit to be eaten. The king, taking it from his hand, ate it, saying coldly, 'It is not good, but it may be eaten,' and eat it we did, like the Pomeranian lad who said that the swine's flesh in his country was so fat that no one could eat of it. 'What is done with it, then?' was the query. 'We eat it,' he answered, coolly, and so it was with our bread. Our poor horses were also put upon scant allowance, feeding upon that which was in truth not fit for any animal to eat. You could easily count the ribs of



the poor creatures, and many of them that winter required no more oats for ever.

“Löwenhaupt now entreated the king to return to Poland and take up his winter-quarters there, predicting our utter ruin if we remained where we now were. But all his importunities were in vain. Charles had set his iron head against it and closed his perverse ear to every reasonable remonstrance. ‘There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Before destruction,’ the holy book warns us, lads, ‘the heart of man is haughty,’ and so it was with our king. His froward spirit refused instruction; and ‘thorns and snares are in the way’ of those who perversely set themselves against counsel. It is ever so. I wish to impress this lesson particularly upon you, Elfdal, for you have many a time reminded me of him I am now telling you about. This one fault clouded his otherwise glorious life.



'*I draw back to Poland!*' was his haughty answer. 'That would look like fleeing before the Russians. The winter will take care of itself. I can lose no time in pressing on to Moscow.' Truly a 'man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.' Charles did not reach Moscow or subdue the Ukraine, and the winter did not take care of itself. The fearful cold and hardships of the winter of 1709 will never fade from the remembrance of those who experienced it. It commenced soon after New Year's. Most of our horses perished, and thousands of our soldiers dropped dead with cold and hunger. Even the very fish in the streams froze. As late as the month of May the Baltic Sea was covered with ice full ten miles out from the coast, and the earth was frozen until the very middle of the same month.

"You can scarcely imagine, boys, what a fearful condition we were in. Had it not been



for the wood, of which we had no lack, there would not have been a man of us left. One good resulted from the cold, however: it caused a suspension of hostilities between the two armies. Mazeppa proved a true friend in need, doing his very utmost to forage for us. About the middle of February our skirmishing again commenced.

“Charles, in the midst of all these discouragements, never gave up the project of taking Moscow, and although our army was now reduced to eighteen thousand men, his inflexible will swerved not. Before we could reach Moscow we must first take Poltava, upon the eastern frontier of the Ukraine, which was well fortified and furnished with vast magazines of provisions. The czar at this time sought to alienate Mazeppa from us, offering to take him again in his favor and to reinstate him in all his former dignity if he only deserted our king, but the brave old man



remained faithful, refusing all his offers. Charles would gladly have had the Zaporogues, through whose country we were obliged to pass, as confederates—the czar also, who bribed them with sixty thousand florins. They took his money, but nevertheless declared themselves for our king. For this we had to thank old Mazeppa, who understood how to manage them far better than we. To be sure, they were not of much use to us, but they suffered us to pass through their country without doing us any injury. Only two thousand of them joined our troops. Beside these, Charles hired some two thousand Walachians. With this motley army we now pressed on to Poltava, ravenous as wolves for the rich stores which no soldiers in the world knew better how to use than we. The king commenced the siege at once, but it did not progress as quickly and successfully as he hoped. The place was strong,



and defended by full eight thousand of a garrison. We had neither men enough to storm it nor ammunition enough to bombard it. There were only eighteen cannon, and such a dearth of balls that we were compelled to wait until they were sent to us from the fortress. These we gathered laboriously together, returning them again to the besieged. But all our efforts availed not: we were repulsed in every assault. Our iron-headed king for once in his life was obliged to wait. This you may know was a sore trial to his impatient spirit. Hard as his head was, he was unable to batter down the walls of the fortress. If he would take Poltava, he must first starve the garrison, and this, with their vast stores of provision, could necessarily progress but slowly.

“The proverb asserts that misfortunes never come singly, and truly such was the case with us. The king had hitherto escaped in so mi-



raculous a manner that he really began to imagine himself proof against stroke, stab and ball. Alas! 'his heart was lifted up with pride, and he forgot to praise, extol and honor the King of heaven, before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, who doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth;' who has said, 'Those that walk in pride I am able to abase.' At Poltava the glory of our king was taken from him. Alas! God was no longer with us as heretofore. We fought not now for his honor or for that of our beloved Fatherland, but to gratify the ambition of a king whose heart had become hardened in pride, and who had forgotten in his arrogance that 'the most high God ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will.' Charles received at Poltava, in his left foot, a shot from a carbine which shattered the bone of his heel. No one was any the wiser of it:



for several hours after it occurred he remained upon horseback giving orders with 'great composure, until he fainted from the loss of blood and was carried to his tent.' A surgeon was then brought, who, after examining the wound, gave it as his opinion that amputation would be absolutely necessary, as the wound had begun to mortify. To this treatment Charles would not submit. While he was disputing about it, it suddenly occurred to me that Newman, the surgeon of our German regiment, might possibly entertain a different opinion. Going at once in search of him, I brought him providentially to the king. He undertook to save the foot if Charles would allow him to make some deep incisions. Seizing his leg, the king held it firmly, saying, 'Fall to work, then; cut boldly and fear nothing.'

"I was in his tent, lads, hearing and seeing all that took place. He watched the opera-



tion coolly, without so much as even a distortion of his countenance. Whilst this was going on, news came that the czar was approaching with his whole army. With his usual self-possession he replied, 'Then all must be in readiness for an attack to-morrow.'"

At this moment the narration suffered an unexpected interruption. Springing from his chair and hurriedly opening the little window of the tower, the old warder leaned eagerly out, heedless of the wild wind that played fiercely with his gray locks and the driving rain that beat upon his unprotected head.

"What is it, Roos?" cried Olav Sparre as he and his two companions after him sprang to the window.

"Did you not hear? A shot! and now another!" exclaimed the old man as after a short interval the hollow reverberation shook the air.



"I hear!" cried Elfdal. "I see the flash; listen! you will hear the report of a third shot in a moment."

"A ship is in danger of being wrecked upon the treacherous reefs," said the old warder, sadly. "God willing, there may still be time to save it if only a pilot be sent at once from Marstrand. It is still some distance from the ridge. Olav, my lad, fly quickly down to the harbor and tell your father not to lose a moment in sending out the pilot-boat. God grant that there may yet be time! Poor fellows! poor fellows! they must be saved."

The three lads, seizing their caps, prepared at once to obey. "Elfdal," cried the old warder, hurriedly and authoritatively—"Elfdal can go with you, but Rönne must stay. I may need him here, and at any rate two messengers are enough to send to the harbor."

The cadet returned to the guard-room,



while his comrades ran down the height as though the storm had lent to them its wings.

"There is not much doubt that they will reach the spot in time," said the old man, turning to Rönne; "and if the colonel loses not a moment with the boat, we need no longer fear for the threatened ship. Let us, meanwhile, send out a still intenser glow to cheer and save, perchance, those poor tempest-tossed mariners." The rain had meantime almost ceased, the clouds parting and rolling themselves into rent gigantic heaps. Here and there could be seen bright stars gleaming through the openings, and at length the full moon poured her mild, clear light over the foaming sea. In that moment they could plainly distinguish a large ship struggling against the heaving billows.

"There she is! there!" exclaimed the warder, pointing over the water. "Do you not



see her? A staunch ship she is, too. Hold out a little longer, my brave fellows, until the pilot comes, and then—”

“See! see, Roos! the boat has just shot out from behind that cliff,” cried Rönne, interrupting him. “It will soon reach her. She flies like a sea-gull.”

“Where, my lad, where?” questioned the old man, eagerly. “Who could see such a nutshell by this faint light? Ah, you have young eyes, Rönne. Ha! now, yes, there she is! I saw her glide like an arrow through a bright streak that the moon cast over the water. Now, methinks, there is no further danger to apprehend. They have the lighthouse and the moon, and he must be a bad pilot who with such beacons could not steer clear of the dangerous reef and find his way to the harbor. But I have lost sight of her now. Where is she, my lad?”

“Hard by the ship,” replied the young



cadet, who had never lost sight of her for a single moment.

“Now watch how the pilot will steer,” said the warder, gazing fixedly at the reeling ship and upheaving billows. “They mount up to the heaven,” murmured the old man. “They go down again to the depths. Their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.’ See, see!” he then cried aloud as a heavy cloud passed which had for a few moments enveloped all in the deepest gloom. “They have escaped the dangerous point, and in less than fifteen minutes will lie secure at anchor. ‘Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,’” he continued as before, “and ‘he bringeth them to their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!’ That was truly help in need, Rönne. If Colonel Sparre had not,



by God's good guidance, sent you lads up here, in all probability not one soul on board of that brave ship would have ever seen the light of another day. From below one can hear the report of the gun, but cannot see the flash and know by that means where the ship lies that is in danger. The colonel is always on duty. Many another would not have had the boat in readiness. The loss of a few moments, and all human help would have been in vain. Olav and Elfdal must have almost flown down the hill. Brave, true Swedish hearts! who could help but love the bold lads? See there! there below, Rönne! The ship! they cast anchor! she is safe! victory! she is safe!"

Even at that very instant the staunch vessel, which had stood in peril of shipwreck upon the reef, now lay secure, and the faithful old warder, after a searching look over the sea, returned with Rönne to the guard-room.



"I think," said he, cheerily, "we have nothing more to fear to-night. The storm has spent its rage and the sky is becoming more and more serene. One can see the coast now with tolerable distinctness for some distance out at sea. It is not likely that I will need you any longer, my lad, and if you would like to join your comrades, I have not the least objection. All danger is over, I think, for this night. Go, my son; you have done your duty."

"But I would rather not, warder. Even if I had not been ordered here on guard, I would not go. I do not leave until you bring your story to a close. Why, the greater part of the night is still before us."

"So the story holds you fast, my boy? You shall hear it, then, and the others too, if they return, but I think it probable they will be prudent and remain in Marstrand."

"Hillo! we are not such simpletons as that,



father Roos!" cried the cheery voice of Olav Sparre as he stepped upon the platform, accompanied by Elfdal and a stranger. "Here we are again, old friend—a little bit wet, to be sure, but as fresh and merry as ever. Father bade me thank you for your vigilance, warder, and say that it should certainly be placed in its proper light. You sent us in the very nick of time. A few minutes' delay, and the ship would have been dashed upon the rocks."

"It is easy to see from this height," modestly returned the old man; "and this is a bad coast if one is not used to navigate it. But what ship was it, Olav? It seemed an unusually large and gallant vessel."

"It was, warder," said the lad—"one of the very best of our Swedish frigates, the 'Torstenson,' carrying sixty cannon. And this stranger who accompanies me was one of the passengers, who desires personally to thank you, warder, and, if you will permit it, listen



with us to your story. When he found that we were about returning to the tower, he asked permission to accompany us, and here we all are."

The old warder eyed the stranger keenly for a moment, feeling convinced in his own mind, as he did so, that he was a person of some distinction. He was still young, and from his noble face beamed forth kindness and grace. Greeting him courteously, the old man invited him to be seated in the guard-room, saying:

"You are heartily welcome, sir, to the little I have to offer—merely a warm room and a gossip about old times."

"That is just what I want," said the stranger. "I heard incidentally from our young friends here that you were a brother in arms of our bold King Charles, and, as my sleep has been disturbed for the night, I invited myself to return with them. It would



please me were you to continue your narrative without allowing my presence to disturb you. I myself had the pleasure of seeing the king shortly before he received the fatal shot before Frederickshald."

"You, sir!" exclaimed the old soldier, in surprise. "You must have been very young then."

"I was. I had accompanied my father, an officer in the king's service, who wished me to become accustomed thus early in life to the fatigues and hardships of war."

"Ah, I understand. Then we are partly comrades too, for I also was at Frederickshald, and these arms helped bear the hero to his tent. You are doubly welcome, friend. I greet you from my very heart."

Extending his hand, the old soldier grasped that of the stranger, shaking it heartily. The cadets now begged the warder to resume his story.



“Not yet, not yet, lads,” said the old man; “we must first have a cup of tea, which I am sure will not prove unwelcome to our guest, and you young fellows, too, will not hesitate, I know, to partake of it, particularly after your bath of rain and sea-water. I shall require your assistance, Olav, for a few moments.”

This proposition was welcomed by all, and soon the cheering, refreshing beverage steamed upon the oaken table. Drawing their wooden chairs cosily around it, they heartily enjoyed the warder's hospitality. The cadets again pressing him to resume his story, the old man began.

“We left off, I think, at Poltava,” said he. “I was telling you about the wound that Charles received in his foot. While it was being dressed he actually planned the assault for the following day, after which he laid himself composedly down, and slept as though nothing especial had taken place. With the



dawn of day he was again ready for action. Our army was not lacking in courage, but the forces were too unequal to inspire us with the requisite enthusiasm and hope of success. The czar's army amounted to sixty-five thousand men and one hundred and thirty-two cannon, while with our inconsiderable force we had only four cannon; besides, to prevent an attack in our rear, Charles had stationed a strong corps before Poltava, leaving four thousand men to protect our baggage.

“The prospect was not an inspiring one. As far as the eye could reach the field swarmed with Russians, but we were resolved to conquer or die. Our officers, riding all along the lines, encouraged us by reminding us of Narva. The king, sword in hand and carried in his litter, seemed to be everywhere present. Our cavalry, under General Schlippenbach, made the attack, rushing upon the enemy with such impetuosity that they gave



way like chaff before the wind. We believed that the day was won, and won I have no doubt it would have been had not General Kreutz made an unfortunate and fatal mistake. The king had despatched him with five thousand cavalry to attack the enemy's flank, but, as I said before, he committed a sad blunder, if blunder it can be called, which occasioned the loss of the battle. Meantime the czar gathered together his discouraged cavalry, and they returned to the charge with such vigor that our troops were in their turn disordered, and General Schlippenbach himself was taken prisoner. And now the infantry marched against the flaming mouths of the Russian cannon. Whole lines were swept away. That was a fearful conflict, lads, and in the end we were compelled to retire. Peter now ordered Mentchikof with a strong corps to post himself between us and the fortress, cutting us off thereby from all communication



with our camp. The baggage and the besieging army fell into the hands of the Russians. The king did all in his power to restore order, but it was in vain. Both horses in his litter were killed by a cannon-ball, and scarcely were others put in their place when a second broke the litter itself in pieces and overturned the king. But this affected not his iron will. He was placed at once in a second litter, and tried to rally the army anew. But no courage or resolve could have withstood the overwhelming force of the enemy. No remonstrance could prevail upon Charles to flee. He would surely have fallen into the hands of the Russians had not 'Count Poniatowski drawn up five hundred horse, surrounded and rescued him,' and, with desperate valor breaking through ten regiments of the enemy, continued the wild flight until we at length fortunately met the coach of Count Meyerfeldt; and as the king was suffering



intensely with pain in his wounded foot, we seated him within and fled still farther.

“‘The day is lost,’ said the king; ‘let us rather go to the Turks than fall into the hands of the Russians.’

“Yes, it was lost, and our whole Swedish army besides. Misfortune met us upon every hand. It was now only a war of ambition and conquest, lads, and our God had turned away his face from us. General Löwenhaupt had meanwhile gathered together the remnant of the army, but it did us no good. He was pursued by the enemy, and captured. Well do I recollect that fearful, fatal 8th of July, 1709.

“We will hurry over this part of our narrative as briefly as possible. The reminiscence brings up many a painful scene. I myself received at this time a severe blow upon the head, but it did not prevent me from following the king, who not only was tortured by



the consciousness that from a conquering hero he was now transformed into a wounded fugitive, but he was also suffering from a raging fever, requiring all possible care and attention. Ah, that was truly a deplorable flight. Like the Israelites, 'we wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, hungry and thirsty our souls fainted in us.' But God in his great mercy furnished us water in the desert, 'and gave us drink as out of the great depths. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!' After five hard, suffering days we reached the banks of the Bog, the Russians following close behind us. New misfortunes awaited us upon the Turkish border. The Turks were not willing to transport so many without the permission of the governor of Otchakov, and *he* must first advise with the seraskier of Bender. Much time was lost before the boats were ready.



By this delay five hundred Swedes and Cossacks were taken prisoners without it being in our power to assist them. It was only with the greatest difficulty that we at last reached the Turkish territory.

“Now we were under the protection of the sultan. Charles, who until now had been victor in every battle; he who had deposed one king and had proposed to do the same with regard to the Russian czar; he who had made laws for the Roman emperor and before whom all the crowns of Europe had trembled, —was brought so low that he must now receive a scanty allowance from unbelievers. ‘How was the mighty fallen and the weapons of war perished! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!’ But with all this Charles was not humbled. I do not know if he repented his pride and obstinacy,



which had surely brought him into this pitiable condition. Never did word to this effect pass his lips. Yet although he acted as if he were still the 'invincible' at the head of his powerful army, the worm may have been gnawing at his heart in spite of it all, for I have watched him at times when he imagined himself unobserved, and have seen the contracted brow, the compressed lip and gloomy expression as he sat lost in deep reverie. In these moments the thought may have penetrated his head of iron that he had brought upon himself all this misery by following out his perverse will and ambitious plans instead of closing in with the czar's proposals of peace. Had he done so, he could then have returned to Sweden covered with the renown he had so well won; but, as I said before, he acted as though no misfortune had power to pierce his heart of steel. Well had it been for him had he remembered these



words of holy writ: 'Let not the mighty man glory in his might.'

"But we were not wholly forgotten of God. Like to his people of old, so he decreed concerning us, saying: 'Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.' We were treated with the utmost hospitality, and our wounded king was regarded with honor and the highest respect. As soon as the seraskier of Bender heard that Charles had taken refuge in the Turkish dominions, he sent an aga to him with the assurance that he should receive all that he would require whilst there. They received him as a victorious, not as a vanquished, king. The best dwelling in the place was appointed him. However, he declined this attention, and encamped in the neighborhood of the fortress. We were now in all about eighteen hundred men. We



lived, lads, like the Tartars. Our protectors supplied us bountifully with every comfort. Then, too, the king received daily from the sultan a purse containing in our Christian money about three hundred thalers. We could have lived well and enjoyed ourselves considerably here had we Swedes not sighed for our Fatherland, and, to tell you the truth, lads, we felt, notwithstanding all the attention bestowed upon us, that we were in reality nothing but refugees and prisoners.

“But it mattered little what we thought about this. The king apparently did not trouble himself about it, but even at this very time had conceived in his iron head plans of great magnitude. He had not given up his designs upon Russia, and now urged upon the sultan to raise an army for him to march against the czar. For this purpose he sent Count Poniatowski as an agent to Constantinople, with the charge to leave no measures



untried to induce the sultan to declare war against Russia. The count was a shrewd man, and devoted to the king. Through some means he influenced the mother of his Highness, who was strongly in favor of Charles, whom she called by no other name than that of 'her lion,' and urged upon her son in her zeal to give ear to our king's proposal, saying, 'When will you help my lion to devour this czar?'

"Weeks passed by, however, without anything having been decided upon. It would have now been an easy matter for us to have returned to Sweden. The French king had offered us a safe passage from the Levant to Marseilles, from whence we could easily have returned to our own country. But nothing could induce Charles to give up his plan of dethroning his enemy, the czar. He was ashamed to go back to his kingdom a fugitive. In short, we remained where we were,



and made ourselves as comfortable as possible. As we had nothing else to do, we built us houses, and soon quite a little town sprang up outside of Bender.

“This state of things did not last long. As soon as the king recovered from his wound his old restless spirit returned. Before the sun rose he was ready for action, tiring sometimes three horses a day, and exercising us until the sweat would run down our faces. Charles was supplied with plenty of money, but it was just like pouring water into a sieve. It was scarcely received until it was given out. He was obliged, to be sure, to be lavish, if he wanted to carry out his designs, particularly with the pasha and grand vizier, bribing them upon all occasions to advance his interests. Unfortunately, the baron of Grotthusen, who was his treasurer, thought and acted as did his master. I will just give you an instance, my lads, for I happened to be present once



when the baron submitted to the king a reckoning of some expenditures with only these words: 'Ten thousand crowns divided among the Swedes and Janizaries, the rest to be applied to further exigencies.' 'I like your method of calculation, Grotthusen,' said the king. 'That rascal Müller (his valet de chambre) makes me read whole pages for the sum of ten thousand livres.'

"I could not keep silent when the king made this foolish remark, and, as he always suffered me to speak freely, said: 'If your Majesty permits the baron to do as he pleases with the money, we will soon be a horde of beggars.'

"'What is that you are saying, you simpleton?' he answered, pulling my ear at the same time right smartly, which was often his fashion when in a good humor. 'You do not understand anything about the matter. You had better not speak until you are spoken to,



sirrah. I only give my money to those who know how to turn it again.'

" 'If your Majesty would throw it out of the window, it would turn about as well,' I rejoined. 'You would be saved the trouble then of looking after it.'

"He laughed heartily, saying, 'Well, Roos, you are a saucy knave. I would advise you to trouble yourself no further about things that do not concern you.'

" 'But this does concern me,' I retorted. 'If you have no money in your purse, we all are the losers.'

" 'It shall not be carried that far, my faithful fellow,' he answered earnestly. 'Money is only a means to an end, and if I wish to accomplish successfully a certain end, I must not spare it. You understand me, Roos? Now go!'

"So ended our conversation upon this subject, and the squandering continued as before.



The time that I had so boldly predicted actually came, when the king had not a red heller in his pocket.

“We had visitors in plenty. Curiosity led thousands from Constantinople to see the ‘iron head.’ He was gazed at as if he had been some wild animal, and because it was his habit to abstain from wine and to attend public devotion regularly twice a day, they honored him as a devout Mussulman.

“Meanwhile, Charles hoped and waited for the Turks to take up arms against the Russians, but they did not move. The Count Poniatowski brought it at one time very near a conclusion, the grand vizier promising that he would ‘lead the king to Moscow at the head of two hundred thousand men,’ but that was all we heard about it. The misfortune was that the grand vizier was open to bribery, receiving money from Charles and the czar at the same time; and as Peter sent him a larger



amount than our king could gather together, no more was said about the march to Moscow. The Russian ambassador, Tolstoy, was allowed to sell the captured Swedes as slaves in the market at Constantinople without any remonstrance, even retaining some in his own service. He ordered also that Mazeppa should be delivered up, the faithful old Mazeppa, and in all probability they would have given up the old man of fourscore years, had he not fortunately died 'just at this juncture.' The Russians did not hesitate to assert and proclaim that our king was only a state prisoner in Turkey, and what could we do or say against this? although we were indignant enough, I assure you. If only the king could have gone to Constantinople and arranged matters personally with the sultan! But there was the rub. He would have done so gladly, but he dared not.

"This was the very depth of humiliation.



The all-powerful Charles must now condescend to send petitions by another. Imagining that the sultan must be ignorant 'of the intrigues of his vizier,' he commissioned Poniatowski to present his complaints. But, alas! things were conducted very differently from what they were among us, who were permitted to go openly to our king. In Turkey all must go through the hands of the vizier. Setting forth his bitter complaints in a letter, he entrusted it for a large sum of money to the care of a Greek slave, who had the boldness to force his way through the guard and hand it to the sultan as he was about entering the mosque. It helped us, however, but little. Instead of such an answer as Charles expected, his Highness sent the king twenty-five Arabian horses, one of which was covered with a saddle and housings of great splendor. A note accompanied the present, courteous, to be sure, but so little to the purpose that



the king in his vexation tore it in pieces. The vizier, pretending that he was ignorant of all that had passed, also presented Charles with five splendid steeds. Those sent by the sultan he accepted, but the others he returned with the answer, 'Go and tell your master that I receive no presents from my enemies.'

"In this manner years passed away. It really began to seem as if we should spend our lives there, for Charles had made up his perverse mind that he would not return except at the head of a numerous army. His head of steel could not be moved from this resolve. How matters went in Sweden gave him apparently but little concern. The daily purse and the requisite supply of provisions were still regularly given. The king did not receive them as an alms, which they truly were, but as his due, his invariable answer to all remonstrance about his departure be-



ing, 'I will have a Turkish army before ever I move from this place.'

"After a long, weary time a star of hope glimmered in our horizon. The sultan seemed to suspect the duplicity of his vizier, and not only deposed but banished him. Couprougli, an upright, honorable man, was appointed his successor. He dealt faithfully and generously by us, presenting to the king eight hundred purses, every one of which amounted to five hundred crowns, advising him at the same time to set out at once for Sweden. Charles took the money, but stayed on, for an army he was resolved to have. This vizier also was in course of time deposed, and the seal of the empire given to Mehemet. He was shrewd enough to see that the king had influential friends at court, particularly, as I said before, the mother of the sultan. This induced him to use his influence in our behalf; and at length it really appeared as if



the king's iron head had forced through the formidable barrier, for the Turks actually declared war against Russia.

“It did not take them long to find a pretext. Their borders had not been properly respected by the enemy. Charles had detached about eight hundred Poles and Cossacks of his retinue, with orders to pass the Dniester, that runs by Bender, so as to observe what passed on the frontiers of Poland. The Russian troops at once fell upon them, pursuing them even to the very territory of the sultan. This was just what the king wanted. According to Turkish custom, the Russian ambassador was immediately seized as prisoner, together with all his attendants. The green banner of the Prophet fluttered from the battlements of the Grande Porte. The sultan presented the grand vizier with a magnificent sabre as an indication of his will. He received it reluctantly, professing his utter



ignorance of the art of war, saying: 'I was brought up to handle an axe and cleave wood, not to wield a sword and command your army. Nevertheless, I will do my utmost, but should I be unsuccessful, do not attribute, O sultan, the blame to me.'

"The sly fox sought in this way to protect himself. Among us, lads, in the Swedish camp, there was profound rejoicing. We were heartily tired of the life we had for so long a time been leading, and saw now some prospect of a return to our beloved Fatherland. We were ready to follow wherever the king would lead.

"At last the Turks actually did march against the czar with an army of two hundred thousand men. With this enormous multitude the vizier surrounded the Russians, who only numbered about fifty thousand troops. They were now as securely caught as a mouse in a trap. To complete their misfortunes, they



had only a few days' provision. Count Poniatowski, who was with the Turkish army, gave to the grand vizier the very best advice, viz., that he should not allow himself to be drawn into a battle, but that he should simply famish the czar and his army. About this time he despatched a courier to our king, giving him an account of the situation of the enemy. Charles now thought the hour had come for which he had so ardently longed.

“But, lads, ‘man proposes and God disposes.’ It was not so to be. The Lord in his wisdom had determined otherwise. But I am too fast. The czar was now in as bad a situation as we at Poltava. Shutting himself up in his tent, he ordered that no one be admitted to his presence; but Catharine, his wife, notwithstanding his express command to the contrary, forced her way to his tent and implored him that he would suffer her to negotiate with the vizier for peace. Upon



hearing that all was lost, she had at once written a letter, to which she desired the czar's signature, representing to him that their situation could not possibly be worse than it now was. Her prayers and tears were at last successful, and the paper was signed. She now collected all the money, pearls and diamonds she could gather together and sent them with the letter to Osman-aga, who was the right-hand of the grand vizier. Two hours elapsed, and the messenger had not returned. Their despair and anxiety grew momentarily greater. Catharine herself had given up all hope. The czar now ordered that the baggage should be burnt to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Turks, and that they should break through the enemy with fixed bayonets. The women in the camp began piteously to bewail their sad fate. Seeing nothing in reserve for them upon the dawn of another day but death or slavery, the officers encouraged their sol-



diers to sell their lives dearly. All was confusion and dismay. On a sudden, however, this mortal terror was succeeded by a universal rejoicing. To the surprise of all, the ambassador returned from the Turkish camp, bringing joyful tidings. The paper and present of the czarina had worked wonders, the grand vizier in return sending the consoling answer that Peter should immediately despatch his prime minister to their camp in order to satisfactorily arrange the stipulations for peace.

“But what was a message of mercy to the czar was a thunderbolt for our count. He moved heaven and earth to prevent the treaty, but Osman, the lieutenant of Mehemet, worked against him with all his power, and succeeded too. In the beginning the vizier certainly intended to compel the czar to surrender at discretion, but he suffered himself to be easily persuaded. War, as he had told the sultan,



was not his forte. Then, too, he was a good Mussulman, and the Koran says, 'Thou shalt not so oppress an enemy that in the courage of despair he have recourse to flight.'

"Notwithstanding the violent opposition of Poniatowski, the treaty was concluded, and Catharine rejoiced at the success of her plan, which had fortunately delivered her husband and his whole army out of this dilemma. The Turks even provided food for the half-famished troops, and in two hours after the signing of the treaty excess took the place of want in the Russian camp.

"Whilst this change had taken place in the position of the armies, the courier which the count had despatched arrived at Bender, bringing to Charles news of the czar's desperate situation. The impatience of the king to witness the humiliation and capture of his obstinate foe would not suffer him to rest. Setting out instantly, he rode at full speed



until he reached the Pruth. Here, instead of taking time to ride only half a mile in order to reach the bridge which led across the river, he recklessly plunged with his horse into the stream and swam across. Just as the czar was drawing off his troops he arrived at the Turkish camp. Alighting from his foaming steed at Poniatowski's tent, he heard for the first time of the ignominious treaty which Mehemet had concluded with the czar.

“He stood for a few moments as though stricken by lightning, absolutely not believing the news the count had communicated. At last his rage found vent. Never had I seen even him so fierce as now. His eyes actually flashed fire, his lips trembled, his face was white as the fresh-fallen snow. Rushing from the spot, he flew to the vizier, and in his mad passion not only overwhelmed him with the bitterest reproaches, but accused



him of treachery, vehemently insisting that the negotiations should at once be broken off, and the Russians set upon sword in hand.

“‘Can it be possible, man, that you could be so base as to conclude this shameless peace?’

“The grand vizier, who had preserved a phlegmatic calmness during the violence of the king, now dryly answered, ‘I have a right either to make peace or to make war.’

“‘But the whole Russian army is in your power,’ cried the king.

“‘It is written in the Koran,’ replied the vizier, with unshaken equanimity, ‘Give thy enemy peace when he prays for mercy.’

“‘But does it command you,’ said the king, bitterly, ‘to conclude an ignominious treaty when you have it in your power to dictate the terms? Could you not have taken the czar captive to Constantinople?’

“‘Who would have governed his empire



in his absence?' the vizier asked, coolly. 'It is not proper that all kings should leave their dominions.'

"At this home-thrust the king laughed bitterly, throwing himself upon a divan, and bestowing upon the Turk looks of rage and contempt. In the recklessness of his passion he stretched out his leg, and, entangling his spur in the Turk's robe, deliberately tore it. Again indulging in the harshest invectives, he sprang upon his horse, and with grievously disappointed hopes and a vexed heart rode from the spot.

"Upon returning to our camp, we found it completely overflowed by the waters of the Dniester. On this account we left the neighborhood of Bender and went to Varnitza.

"The vizier now entertained some fear that Charles would represent his conduct in its true light to the sultan. This dread was well grounded: it was not long after until he was



deposed for his perfidy, and his adjutant, Osman, strangled. Fearing our continued stay would prove fatal to himself, he exerted himself to the utmost to get us out of the country as soon as possible. He obtained from the German emperor a free pass for the king through his states, offering him besides an escort of eight thousand Turks, should he prefer returning to Sweden through Poland. But Charles harshly and abruptly refused, asserting that he would not move from Varnitza without an army of one hundred thousand men. The vizier now commissioned the seraskier of Bender to urge him to depart, but his answer to him was, 'that he would hang the first one who came to him with proposals derogatory to his honor and dignity.' No humiliation could subdue his haughty and intractable spirit.

"We established ourselves at Varnitza as if we intended remaining there all our lives.



The king built for himself a large stone house, and although he had never cared particularly for splendor, he had it furnished in a most sumptuous manner, so as to command the respect of the Turks. It was built as strongly as though he imagined the time might come when this would be of some peculiar advantage. A chancery was also erected beside it, and a handsome building for his favorite, Baron Grotthusen.

“The poor grand vizier argued, from all these preparations, that he was not to get rid in a hurry of his troublesome guest. He therefore tried to make his sojourn as unpleasant as possible. The Seraskier of Bender was required to threaten him with the sultan’s highest dissatisfaction if he did not immediately leave Turkey. He was a mild, good-natured creature, and the commission was not an agreeable one, but he was compelled to obey, although he tried to gild the bitter pill



as far as practicable. Charles only laughed at his lame attempt, and answered: 'I will be ready to leave when Sultan Achmet grants me two favors.'

"'And what are they?' questioned the seraskier, well pleased, for he imagined they were now nearing a conclusion.

"'First,' continued Charles, 'he must punish the grand vizier; secondly, he must send with me to Poland one hundred thousand men.'

"Well might the seraskier be amazed at the obstinacy and perverseness of this head of iron.

"The king remained firm in his resolve; the hundred thousand men he would not give up, and he believed the Turks would eventually grant his unreasonable demand.

"The vizier was now thoroughly vexed with the king, and intercepted all letters which he sent to Constantinople. In consequence of this, Charles could not complain



of him to the sultan, or receive money from Stamboul. What was still worse for us, he withheld a greater part of our daily allowance, threatening us with its entire withdrawal if we still remained obstinate. The king took no further notice of this than to say to his steward: 'Hitherto you have only had two tables: I command you to have four for the future.' This truly was carried out, but in order to do so money must be borrowed from Jew, Christian, Turk, and even the Janizaries, at a most exorbitant interest. At this reckless conduct many of us Swedes—I among the number—sincerely grieved, but Charles rejected all counsel, and nothing was left us but to obey.

“At last the king was gratified in seeing the vizier deposed. Count Poniatowski drew up a full report of the true situation of the Russian army upon the banks of the Pruth, which clearly set forth that a far more glorious and



honorable peace could have been effected had it not been for the vizier's treachery. This paper was placed, through some special influence, in the hands of the sultan. The matter being now closely investigated, there was found, in the hands of Osman, Catharine's ring and twenty thousand gold pieces, of both Saxon and Russian coinage. The lieutenant, therefore, as well as the vizier, received the wages of his treachery. But all these things did not advance our interests in the least.

"Jussuf was now appointed in the place of Mehemet. He righteously dealt out to us our allowance of money and provisions. Again did Charles indulge the hope that all would be as he desired, for war with Russia seemed now upon the point of breaking out. But his hope was in vain. Peace was restored, and the sultan himself wrote a letter to the king, in which he courteously but determinedly desired him to depart before winter, promising



at the same time to supply him with a sufficient guard, money and all that was requisite for the journey. The letter was dated from Constantinople, April 14, 1712, and the signature was in the sultan's own handwriting.

“We had now received our orders. They were peremptory. The pill was not this time so splendidly gilded as before. What effect, think you, my lads, had all this upon our head of steel? Not one inch did it move him from his resolve. He replied to the sultan that he would ever remember with gratitude the favors he had conferred upon him, and that he did not think it could be his intention to send him ‘back with the simple guard of a flying camp through a country swarming with his enemies.’ No preparations were made to depart, although the winter gradually drew near.

“The seraskier of Bender insisted more peremptorily than ever that he should leave the Turkish dominions, threatening violence



did he not do so at once. 'I cannot think of going,' Charles replied, 'before my debts are paid.' 'How much does your Majesty require for that purpose?' inquired the sadly-perplexed man. 'One thousand purses' (which is nearly a half million gulden), said the king.

"The seraskier wrote instantly to the sultan, and so great was his forbearance that he ordered, instead of the amount mentioned by Charles, that twelve hundred purses should be given him, but with the express stipulation that they were not to be delivered up to the king of Sweden until he should have begun his journey. In spite of all this, however, the good-natured, simple-hearted man allowed himself to be persuaded by the treasurer to part with the money before the king had set out from Varnitza.

"This was a little too much for even Turkish patience. Upon hearing of this, the sul-



tan called a divan, as the state's council is called there, at which he himself spoke. This is a very unusual thing for a Turkish monarch. It was now resolved that if their troublesome guest would not go by fair means he should be compelled by force.

“‘My head will be the forfeit,’ said the seraskier as he delivered up the money against the express orders of the sultan. I was present, lads, during their conference, and saw the trouble and perplexity of the poor man. When the deed was actually done, he even shed tears in his distress.

“‘That shall not happen,’ said Charles, consolingly; ‘I will excuse you to your lord.’

“‘Ah,’ sighed the seraskier, ‘my master can punish faults, but cannot excuse them.’

“The poor fellow, however, slipped through this time with a sharp reproof. But he was commissioned to report the result of the divan to the king at Varnitza, telling him that



the patience of the sultan was now exhausted, that he must prepare to depart instantly, or he would be forced to go against his will.

“‘Obey your master if you dare,’ was the king’s answer, ‘but leave my presence instantly!’

“The dejected seraskier left with a troubled countenance, and from that hour our supply of provision and even the guard of honor were withdrawn.

“The seven thousand Poles and Cossacks who had gradually gathered around the king received orders they should leave our camp and seek protection at Bender, if they would not perish of hunger. They obeyed, but we Swedes remained faithful to our wayward king. Not much time was now lost. We were obliged to prepare ourselves for an attack, as twenty thousand Tartars and six thousand Turks marched without further delay against us.



“We were now truly pitiably situated, but even under these circumstances Charles would not bend his iron will. We fortified ourselves as well as we were able, the king, his prime minister, treasurer, clerks and servants all assisting with their own hands. When the windows and doors of the stone house were sufficiently barricaded, Charles seated himself composedly, playing a game of chess with Baron Grotthusen.

“We all feared less for ourselves than for the king. One of his attendants fell at his feet, imploring him not thus uselessly to sacrifice his life. His chaplain even adjured him by the holy Scriptures not to place himself recklessly in the midst of such great danger.

“But Charles was not to be moved in his obstinacy. ‘It is your business,’ said he to the preacher, ‘to pray for me, not to give me counsel.’

“Two of his generals, Hård and Dahldorf,



besought him by the wounds they had received at his side to desist.

“‘These prove,’ said the king as he looked upon them, ‘that we have fought together valiantly. You have hitherto done your duty: do it to-day likewise.’

“He was inexorable, and we prepared ourselves for a hard struggle.

“And now the hour had come which we had so long dreaded. The Turks were actually approaching. Every one of us hastened to his post. The king defended his own house, and I found myself among his suite. The chancery was entrusted to Müller and his secretary, Ehrenpreis. To the menial servants were also assigned various posts.

“The enemy came upon us in good earnest, shouting as they advanced, ‘Demirbash!’—surrender!

“Even in this extremity they showed regard for the life of the king, hoping that he



would at last yield himself peaceably to their overpowering numbers. But they were mistaken. The baron of Grotthusen alone approached them to hold a parley, thinking he might by this means avert the threatened storm.

“‘My friends,’ he cried, ‘will you murder a handful of defenceless Swedes? Have you forgotten, brave Janizaries, all the favors you have received from us? Will you take the life of the bold king of Sweden, whom you have professed to love and honor?—one who has constantly conferred benefits upon you? He only asks of you, my brave men, three days’ respite, and the order of the sultan is by no means so urgent as has been represented to you.’

“‘No respite, no respite now!’ cried the seraskier and Tartar Khan. ‘Charge, Tartars, charge!’

“But the Janizaries obeyed not. They



reverenced the king highly, and even threatened their officers in their zeal with mutiny if they did not grant us the desired three days' respite.

“The poor seraskier now found himself again in a pitiable and painful perplexity. At length, driven to his wits' end, he gathered together the officers and veterans of the turbulent Janizaries and read to them the sultan's command. Nevertheless, they still determinedly refused to obey, and a middle course was obliged to be resorted to. Sixty old warriors demanded permission of the seraskier to go to the king, begging of him to confide himself to them, offering at the same time to act as his special body-guard. This request was granted with joy, for the baron desired this affair to be amicably settled. Accordingly, this venerable unarmed deputation conferred with Baron Grotthusen and the chancellor, declaring that they came only as a guard for



the king, intending to take him in safety to Adrianople, where he would confer in person with the sultan, and matters could be thus amicably arranged.

“Meanwhile, during this conference with Grotthusen, Charles unfortunately received the letter from his ambassador, Count Poniatowski, confirming the seraskier’s statement. The sultan’s requirement seemed to our perverse king exceedingly harsh and severe, and made him now more than ever determined obstinately to resist.

“The contents of this letter were like oil upon the flames of rage and willfulness that consumed him. No proposition, however reasonable, could have induced him to leave. He would far rather have died. To the deputation, whom he would not even admit to his presence, he sent the insulting answer that he ‘would hang up the pasha and shave the beards of any Janizaries who brought



him such proposals.' This, boys, is the greatest insult that can be offered to a Turk. In short, he followed as usual his own counsel, rejecting all reasonable advice that was offered.

"These reminiscences are not pleasant, for I loved my king from my very heart, but, my lads, I wish this story to benefit your future lives. Particularly do I wish to impress upon you these lessons: 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction, but he that refuseth reproof erreth. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'

"But I must hasten. The bearded Janizaries left in a great rage, crying out as they departed, 'Ah, this iron head! since he will perish, let him perish!'

"Upon returning to their camp, they re-



ported the contemptuous answer they had received from Charles, and together with their comrades vowed to avenge the insult.

“We soon learned that they meant to keep their vow in good earnest. We were engaged as usual in our morning’s service when the battle-cry unexpectedly surprised us. Springing up, each man rushed to his post, knowing well a fierce conflict was before him. All fought with their accustomed bravery, but the enemy far outnumbered us. Surrounding our camp, they pressed us so hard that most of our little band surrendered, thinking truly, as they did so, that this would prove the only means of saving the life of the king. But Charles, his generals, Hård, Daldorf and Sparre, together with a small body of devoted followers, amongst whom I found myself, hastened to the stone building, the king crying to us as we did so, ‘Let us go and defend the house,’ adding, with a smile,



‘Come, my brave Swedes, we will fight *pro aris et focis*.’

“The generals were astounded at this cool indifference, but they as well as we followed, and succeeded in reaching the house. It was truly high time that we did so, for when we reached the door we found it had been already forced by the Tartars. In order to gain entrance we were obliged to press our way through, the king only alighting from his horse at the door of his own apartment.

“We were now within, to be sure, but the Turks swarmed around us like midges. We had not much time given us for reflection. Our hands were full, and we defended the king as well as we possibly could.—But I see it is time to pause, my lads. Fresh coal must be carried. Our beacon-fire burns no longer as clearly as it ought, and, as a goodly portion of the night still remains, we must not neglect our duty.’



The interruption was not altogether agreeable, but the cadets, accustomed to discipline, offered no objection, at once starting to obey the command of the warder. The stranger also bore his part in carrying coal and raking the fire, smilingly saying as the old man remonstrated, "No, no, my friend! if I have shared the pleasure with these boys, surely it is no more than right that I should share their work. And besides, it is to my own advantage; the sooner we get through, so much the sooner will we hear the rest of our story."

The old warder smiled his gratification, and without further objection suffered the stranger to render his share of assistance.





## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE LAST STRUGGLE.*

THE beacon-fire beamed anew over the sea, with a strange unearthly splendor in its glow, and all returned to the guard-room, save the old warder, who still lingered studying wind and weather, but for this night at least he could dismiss all further apprehension. The storm had passed from the now clear and almost cloudless sky, the moon shed her soft and tranquil light down upon the foaming billows, and although the waves still dashed turbulently against the rocks and shore, one could readily prophesy that before daybreak its wrath would be fully expended.

“All’s well,” said the old man as he re-



turned to the little room and seated himself in his arm-chair. "It is not likely that we will have any further interruption to-night, and therefore, friends, if it is agreeable to you, we will proceed with our story. Not very much more now remains for me to tell you about the 'iron head,' as the Turks called him.

"Our fight with the Janizaries was no joke, I can tell you, lads. The king repelled the assault with his usual bravery. Throwing my arms around him, I implored him to leave the defence to us, and to retire to the greater security of his own apartment, but all entreaties were in vain: move from that spot he would not.

"Although the balls whizzed and whistled around us like hailstones, he took up his position at a window overlooking a courtyard occupied by several hundred Turks, who kept up an incessant fire. Many of them forced their way into the house through the broken



windows, and fought madly with our men in the hall and various apartments of the building. When the king saw this, nothing could restrain him. Wrenching himself loose from my close grasp—for I still retained hold of his sword-belt—he sprang from the spot. Vexed that he had escaped, I rushed after him, and succeeded in capturing him again, crying as I did so: ‘Your Majesty will not get off now quite so easily.’

“He resisted mightily, but I held on like grim death until four Swedes, seeing my efforts, came to my relief. Between us, in spite of his struggles, we succeeded in dragging him within the door, which was on the instant closely barricaded.

“The king as soon as freed pressed into the room where the confusion was greatest, we after him to protect and defend him as far as possible. So soon as the Janizaries espied him, they shouted, ‘Demirbash! De-



mirbash!" pressing eagerly upon him on all sides. The pasha of Bender had promised to each one who assisted in capturing the king eight ducats did they even so much as touch his garments, but the poor wretches shared the fate of the silly moths who flutter around the light.

"All fell that approached him. A Janizary whom he had wounded shot at the king, but fortunately, in the confusion, he had not aimed aright, the ball only passing close to his face and tearing away a piece of his ear. General Hård, who was standing close behind him, had his arm shattered by the same shot, but he was amply revenged, for the king on the instant ran his sword through the Turk's breast, and the poor wretch dropped at his feet as though struck by lightning.

"After a furious fight we chased them from room to room, they attempting to escape from the windows. When the house was at last



cleared, the king stationed five or six men at each window, and in this way we handful of Swedes held out eight long hours against an army of Turks and Tartars. While we with shot and sabre exchanged blow for blow, the king passed from point to point encouraging us to further resistance. He really appeared delighted, boys, as though he considered it all a good joke, but I can assure you the Turks were in earnest this time. Although we could not think the course Charles had taken was under the circumstances right, yet we Swedes felt it our duty to defend to the death the person of our king. He carried to us our ammunition with his own hands, even searching the pockets of those who lay around us.

“‘Of what use is it to the dead?’ said he; ‘the living need it now.’

“While we defended the lower part of the house the Turks again swarmed plundering



through the upper rooms. I watched the king closely, for it seemed to me that he was meditating another mad deed. Suddenly shouting, 'Let us drive out these barbarians!' he rushed up the staircase sword in hand. The Turks, terrified at his unexpected appearance, threw down their booty, fleeing in all directions as though Satan himself was after them, some escaping from the windows, while others concealed themselves in the cellar. The king, taking advantage of the panic, pursued them 'with much bloodshed' from room to room, succeeding in clearing the house in a few minutes. We were under the impression that not one remained, but two Janizaries were found concealed beneath the king's bed. One of them he cut down, but to the other, who piteously implored his mercy, he gave his life.

"'I will pardon you upon your solemn oath,' said he, 'that you will faithfully de-



scribe to the seraskier all that you have this day seen.'

"The poor trembling creature gladly promised, and with one leap sprang out of the window. While we were occupied with this scene for a few moments the king passed into an ante-room, thoughtlessly closing the door behind him. Now this room was not garrisoned. Noticing after a time the absence of the king, an indescribable fear took possession of me. Rushing into the next apartment, what was my terror not to find him there! I saw that our small number was considerably diminished by the shots of the enemy, but at the time this troubled me little. I was seeking my king, I must find him! What if I did not! Tortured by evil forebodings, I rushed almost breathless from room to room, shouting wildly in my terror, until I reached that of Herr von Duben. Throwing open the door, the sight that met my eyes was proof sufficient that my



fears had not been groundless. The king was in deadly combat with several Turks. 'God be praised!' cried I aloud in the fullness of my gratitude, for his life was still spared. The next moment the report of my pistol was heard, and one of the kerls fell dead at his feet. 'My brave Roos!' he cried as he caught sight of me through the powder and smoke; and such a look he then cast upon me as even to this very day, lads, makes my old heart burn within me. The next moment the second miscreant fell with cleft skull at one sabre-stroke of the king, and the third met his fate by a pistol-ball through his breast. 'Ever at the right time, you never forget your sovereign, Roos,' said he as he wiped the blood that flowed from the wound he had received in this fierce encounter. 'Brave fellow! brave fellow!' he continued. 'But where are the rest? Have they all fled but you?'

"'Oh no, your Majesty,' I replied, 'only a



wretch could desert his king at such an hour as this. Alas! the most of them are captives or slain.'

"'Let us then defend the house alone, Roos.'

"So was it ever: no misfortune could bow, no defeat change, his iron will. We returned to the hall to find it still defended by our faithful little band. Every attempt upon the part of the Turks to force their way in at the windows was at once repelled, and although their cannon kept up an incessant fire, our house was too massive to sustain much injury.

"The seraskier and Tartar khan, provoked at the king's obstinacy, now resolved to set the house on fire. This was done by arrows with lighted matches shot upon the roof. Charles, instead of leaving the house, as they supposed he would do, immediately gave orders to extinguish the flames, even assist-



ing with his own hands in putting them out. At last they succeeded in heaping up some loads of hay upon the undefended side, setting it suddenly on fire. Again did we attempt to extinguish it. Charles, with the assistance of two Swedes, lifted a vessel which he supposed was filled with water, throwing it upon the place where the fire was greatest. But unfortunately it proved to be spirits, which only increased the violence of the flames.

“Delay was now certain destruction. Forcing our way up the staircase in the very face of the leaping, devouring flames, we at last reached the roof, only to find that it was already on fire.

“‘Tear off the roof!’ cried the king.

“We did our utmost to obey, but our hands were the instruments by which it was to be accomplished; besides, as soon as we were seen by the Turks, they opened upon us a hot fire. We were compelled to desist,



so as not to suffocate with the smoke and flame. We forced our way back, covering our faces, as we did so, with our clothing. After great difficulty and danger we reached our best defended post, only to find it, to our great consternation, also in flames.

“‘To my room,’ cried the king, in a voice stifled by smoke and fatigue.

“Scarcely had the words escaped his lips when four Turks of so horrible an appearance fell upon him that their very looks had alone been enough to fill one with terror, but the king did not lose his presence of mind for one moment. With one hand he defended himself with his sword, with the other he seized the loaded carbine out of my grasp, shooting one of his assailants dead upon the spot.

“‘Do not expose your life, my king,’ I exclaimed as I threw myself upon the Janizary who pressed upon him. At that very



instant the rascal shot off his pistol, I felt suddenly a burning pain in my head, and tottered back into the arms of the king. Providentially, I was not dangerously hurt, and, quickly recovering, rushed upon them, together with three or four other Swedes, and after a short combat succeeded in overpowering them. Again had the windows to be defended. The Janizaries had renewed their attack, deeming us now altogether powerless and confused with the fire, but they had deceived themselves, for even this fresh assault was repelled. Our almost superhuman efforts, however, were in vain; the roof fell in, and we expected every instant to be buried in the ruins. In this extremity, Walberg cried out, while he wiped the sweat from his blackened face, 'It is all in vain! We must at last surrender.'

"The king heard him, and turning quickly around, said, 'What a strange fellow, who



would rather be a prisoner with the Turks than mingle his ashes with those of his sovereign! 'Courage, my brave Swedes,' he then cried, turning toward us; 'we will defend ourselves as long as we can.'

"As the king said this, it suddenly occurred to me that it might be possible to defend ourselves better in another position. Accordingly, I cried out that the chancery was but fifty paces off, and was proof against fire, having a stone roof.

"The eyes of the king flashed, and coming toward me, he exclaimed, 'There is a true Swede for you! Let us take all the powder and ball we can carry. Roos, my brave fellow, I appoint you upon this spot colonel, and you, my men, all bear witness, should I fall this day, that the same remains valid. You have long deserved this, Roos. Thank me not: we have something else to do now than to waste one moment in sentiment,' said



he as he relinquished my hand, which he for one instant held in a close, tight grasp. 'Come, my friends! let us hew our way to the chancery.'

"I heard these words as one in a dream. My appointment, my monarch's unexpected praise, almost stunned me. Tears forced themselves into my eyes. The king, observing them, clapped me upon my shoulder, crying, 'Forward, Colonel Roos! Fight now, weep afterward.'

"'Your Majesty shall see that I am ready,' I replied. We sallied forth from the burning house, the king at our head, with such impetuosity that the Turks, astonished at our sudden appearance, retreated about fifty paces. It was as though some sorcerer held them in his power, transforming them in an instant into stone, gazing straight upon us without so much as raising a hand in their defence. But the spell was soon broken. The pasha



of Bender shouted, 'Capture the iron head!' The officers of the Janizaries cried, 'Forward! forward!' We were completely surrounded. Our few faithful Swedes could no longer resist the overpowering numbers of the enemy. The king, who had on his high cavalry boots, entangling himself with his spurs, now fell. On the instant twenty Janizaries rushed upon him, and the rest of us were so surrounded by the enemy that we could render him no assistance. He was now compelled to yield. So as not to submit to the mortification of giving up his sword, he threw it from him, and, carried by the legs and arms, he was taken to the pasha's tent. He made no resistance the moment he was captured, but suffered himself to be carried as a patient child. We all now surrendered. The struggle had ended. This happened upon the evening of the 12th of February, 1713.

"The pasha received the king in his tent



courteously, inviting him to be seated upon the divan, but Charles ignored all his politeness, and haughtily remained standing.

“‘Allah be praised that your Majesty’s life is spared,’ said the Turk. ‘It was exceedingly unpleasant for me to proceed to such extremities, but it was in obedience to the command of the sultan.’

“‘I, for my part,’ said the king, ‘am only vexed that my three hundred Swedes surrendered when they did. Had they done their duty, we could have held out at least ten days longer.’

“Notwithstanding the conduct of the king, he was treated in a manner that would have done credit to any Christian nation. He was conducted to Bender upon a richly-caparisoned horse and waited upon with marked respect by the pasha and his attendants. Owing to his own intercession, I was permitted to accompany him. The rest of my coun-



trymen were not so fortunate. Officers and soldiers were chained together and dragged away into miserable slavery. This was the end of a war of ambition, lads. The king's heart had become lifted up, and he said in his pride, 'I have done all this by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty,' and God cast him down from his high place. But, alas! with all this he humbled not himself 'nor glorified the God in whose hand his very breath was.' Even his chancellor and generals shared the same sad fate, until at length, released through the mediation of the king, they were permitted to return to Sweden.

"All possible respect was shown to Charles when he arrived at Bender. A sumptuous couch was prepared for him; but as it had never been his custom to indulge in such luxuries, instead of making use of it he threw himself booted and spurred upon a divan,



where he soon fell into a heavy sleep. A Turkish guard respectfully placed a covering upon his head, which the king soon thrust aside, to the utter amazement of the Mussulman, who could not comprehend how a crowned monarch could rest 'in his boots and bare-headed.'

"The following morning the pasha conducted Baron Fabricius, who had been captured in the redoubt, to his presence. He was deeply affected when he saw the deplorable condition of the 'king, with torn clothing, eyebrows burnt, and his whole body covered with dust and blood.' Bending the knee before him, he was at first unable to utter a word. As he saw that the king, in spite of all his misfortunes, was apparently in good spirits, he inquired if it were really true that he with his own hand had slain twenty Janizaries. 'Well, well,' replied the king, 'a story, you know, never loses in the telling.'



“We did not remain long at Bender, but were taken to Adrianople. The king’s treasurer and chancellor, who had meantime been released, accompanied him, several of the officers and myself following in his train. We could not refrain from tears as we looked upon our king, a captive among unbelievers. When some one suggested to the pasha that it would be courteous and proper to return to Charles his sword, he drew back in consternation, exclaiming, ‘Allah protect us! he would cut off all our beards!’ but it was not long until it was given him.

“When Adrianople was reached, Charles desired that he might fix his residence at Demotica, a castle in the neighborhood of the city. This wish was complied with, to be sure, but in so offensive a manner that it was easy to be seen that the hospitality of the Turks toward our king was considerably upon the wane. Provision was made for the



king's own table and that of his retinue, but only twenty-five crowns daily in money, instead of the five hundred he had received at Bender.

“Charles was now reaping what he had sown, and he rested at Demotica as upon thorns. The Turkish government was determined to render his further stay as disagreeable as possible, and in addition to this humiliation news was brought the king from Sweden which certainly had not the effect of raising his spirits or temper.

“Grief and trouble at last did their work, and Charles was compelled to bow his proud head before them. His health gave way, and he was stretched upon a bed of sickness. As no word had been sent by him to Sweden since his stay at Demotica, the report was circulated that he could not possibly recover. In consequence of this and his prolonged absence from his kingdom, the Swedish council



deemed it advisable to offer the regency to Ulrika, the king's sister. They vindicated their position by saying that they had given up all hopes of Charles' return, and that the long war had utterly impoverished the kingdom. Under these circumstances they deemed themselves justifiable in giving the reins of government into the hands of the princess, who in the name of her brother was to conclude a peace with the czar of Russia.

"Ulrika knew her brother well enough to be aware that he would never sanction this step. So instead of proceeding to act upon her own responsibility, she sent General Liewen as ambassador to Demotica, who represented truly to Charles the deplorable state of his kingdom, requesting his advice as to their mode of procedure. When he heard of the proposal of his counsel, he was very indignant, exclaiming in his anger that he would 'rout them with his cane when he re-



turned, and that meanwhile he would send his boots to preside at their session.'

"The ambassador, a calm and judicious man, suffered the king to expend his wrath, then quietly and earnestly described the misery and distress of his dominions. War, famine and pestilence, he represented, had plunged Sweden into the most grievous and miserable condition, so that it was utterly unable to resist the constant ravages of the enemy; that with an exhausted treasury and impoverished subjects the fleet could no longer be supported or the army recruited. 'In short,' said he, 'our situation is indeed extreme, and Sweden stands upon the very brink of destruction. If your Majesty still obstinately persist in remaining absent from your kingdom, I will not be answerable for the consequences.'

"'What do you mean by that?' curtly demanded the king.



“‘The deposing of your Majesty,’ boldly replied the ambassador.

“This shot reached its mark, lads. The king sat as though lost in deep thought. At last he actually determined to return to his country and look after matters himself. This resolve was at once conveyed by the French ambassador to the vizier.

“He replied, ‘Tell him that he may either go or stay, as he please, but he must fix upon the day of his departure. Under no circumstances shall it be changed so as to bring us into such another difficulty as that of Bender.’

“The ambassador communicated this message, but was too courteous to deliver it as rudely as it had been given, and the king named the 1st day of October, 1714, as the date of his departure, asserting, however, that he would not leave as a fugitive, but as a king. He accordingly sent Baron Grotthusen with a



retinue of fourteen persons as 'ambassador extraordinary' to Constantinople to take formal leave and return thanks for the protection thus far vouchsafed. To equip and send this embassy threw the king into the greatest embarrassment. The treasurer bore also the commission to borrow one million from the Porte. He failed, however, in obtaining it, the grand vizier answering with dry coolness that 'his master knew how to give when he thought proper, but it was beneath his dignity to lend. The king,' he said, 'should have every requisite for his journey, that possibly the sultan might make some pecuniary present, but he would not have it expected.' And now was our king most bitterly humiliated, but he was obliged to submit to their conditions. It is not pleasant for me, my lads, to revert to these times. I had much rather pass them by. Would that the lesson might make a deep impression upon your future



lives! Always remember, as soldiers of your Fatherland, that *unlawful ambition* will ever meet with defeat and humiliation. This has been the inevitable consequence from the time 'Lucifer, son of the morning,' was cast down from heaven. He said in his heart, 'I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' And God said: 'Thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?' Better, far better, to have said with the wise king of Israel, 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of



thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.' But I must hasten," said the old warrior, with a sigh. "The night is rapidly drawing to a close.

"At length, to our joy, on the 1st of October, 1714, we left Demotica for our journey home. The sultan presented the king with a magnificent purple tent richly embroidered with gold, a sabre whose hilt was studded with diamonds, and eight Arabian horses splendidly caparisoned, together with every requisite for our journey. Several companies of Janizaries and other troops were also appointed to accompany the king to the frontiers. When the pasha learned that the king's attendants had borrowed money from the Turks at an enormous percentage, he told Charles that only the principal, not the exorbitant interest, need be paid, 'that usury



was forbidden by the Mahometan law.' Our proud sovereign was not willing, however, to avail himself of this hint, replying, 'No, if any of my people have given bills for a hundred crowns, I will pay them, though they should not even have received ten;' proposing to his creditors to follow him to Sweden, assuring them that all should be paid, even to the last heller and pfennig, and this was actually done, lads. Several of them went to Sweden, 'and Grotthusen was commissioned to see them paid.'

"The Turks, out of respect for the king, made very short day's marches. This courtesy, you may well imagine, he was unable to appreciate; his restless, impatient spirit could not brook restraint. An ardent longing for his country, toward which he had for so long a time been indifferent, now took possession of him, and, as usual, this desire had to be gratified at all hazards.



“He retained upon the journey his usual habit of rising about three o'clock in the morning, awakening his attendants and continuing the march before it was light. This course excited considerable surprise among the Turks, and every morning was heard upon all sides the cry, ‘Allah il Allah! what a sultan!’

“In this way we journeyed until we reached the borders of Transylvania, where the king took leave of his Turkish attendants. And now our route lay through the imperial dominions. The king had received a safe-conduct in the name of the emperor, the princes and states of Germany. Times were not as they had been when Charles was at the head of a powerful and victorious army. Ah! the comparison was sad and humiliating to us Swedes.

“All arrangements had been made by his imperial Majesty to entertain the king in a



manner suitable to his dignity; the entire route was accurately laid down, even where he should dine and sleep. Those in authority at the designated points had orders to treat their royal guest with all possible respect and honor. The king could have journeyed with great comfort had he not been tormented by his impatient, restless spirit. Men, women and children flocked together from all the towns and villages along our way to look upon the renowned king of Sweden, whose very name had inspired all Europe with terror. This, I can assure you, was not to the fancy of the king, who knew that all these attentions only rendered his misfortunes more conspicuous.

“And now he resolved upon the course which I have no doubt he had for some time contemplated. One evening—well do I remember the time, boys—he informed his two adjutants, Baron Rossen and Colonel Düring,



that he intended, upon the dawn of the following morning, to separate himself from his attendants, and proceed post to Sweden, so as to arrive in his own kingdom as soon as possible. They two should accompany him, but the rest of his attendants should follow the prescribed route, making their way to Stralsund, where they would again meet. The adjutants, as you can imagine, were taken by surprise by this announcement, but acquiesced willingly in the king's desire. Upon that same evening, Charles gathered together his followers, informing them of his design. No one dreamed of opposing him, yet the communication caused the greatest consternation and regret. This sudden change of affairs took me completely by surprise, but I quickly and decidedly resolved that upon no consideration would I be separated from the king. I had not long to make my arrangements. First of all, I chose one of the very best of



the Arabian horses, and lay down close beside the door of the barn where the king had taken up his quarters for the night. Before daybreak I was awake, and awaited in silence what would follow. By the first faint streak of gray the horses were ready, and the king, Rossen and Düring, mounting, galloped rapidly from the spot. So as to completely disguise himself, the king wore a black wig and the uniform of an officer. As he passed from the barn, I saw him cast one pitying glance toward his sleeping followers, then leap upon his horse, whose stirrups Düring held.

“‘On, Rossen, on!’ he then exclaimed. ‘Do not forget that until we reach Stralsund I am not the king, but Karl Frisch, Swedish captain.’

“Giving then his horse the spur, he rode from the spot, his two attendants, at full speed, after him.



“‘Aha!’ thought I; ‘Karl Frisch, is it? Swedish captain! It will be well to know the name in case I should lose the trace.’

“My horse was fresh, a splendid, indefatigable racer. When I could hear but faintly the hoof-beats of the riders, I mounted my steed, and fleet as a bird flew after the king. When the day dawned I kept at a respectful distance from them, so as not to be seen until the right time. It would have been an easy thing for me to have caught up with them. Several times during the course of the day did they change horses, but my Abdul was as fresh and active in the evening as though he had only traveled a few hours. As twilight drew on, I thought the king would remain at the next station during the night, but I had not judged aright. It was quite dark as we rode into the post-yard, so that I had no fear of being recognized by the king or his attendants. However, it mattered but



little to me now whether he found me out or not. We were a good distance from the camp, and I felt pretty certain that I would not be sent back. Nevertheless, I came to the conclusion that I would not present myself before him until the following morning.

“The king had scarcely entered the yard, I close at his heels, when he exclaimed, impatiently: ‘Quick, sir postmaster! Three courier horses, and postilion as guide. We have not one moment to lose!’

“‘Not quite so fast, master!’ replied the man; ‘the horses must be first saddled. You had much better step into the house, gentlemen.’

“‘How long will it take to have them ready, sirrah? How long?’

“‘About ten minutes. I will order the postilion to make all possible haste.’

“This statement appeared to satisfy the king, for he at once alighted and entered the



house with his companions. This arrangement was not in the least satisfactory to me—not that I cared to ride a station farther, but I thought of my noble Abdul: he ought to have an hour to rest.

“Setting my wits to work, I crept as silently as possible to the stable, and, seeking the postilion, promised him a ducat trinkgeld if he would oblige me by delaying the harnessing of the horses as long as possible. The fellow was easily persuaded. ‘Let me alone for that, sir,’ said he; ‘I can be as slow as you would desire.’

“Leaving him to arrange affairs as he thought best, and throwing Abdul some oats, I entered the kitchen of the inn, where I called for something to eat, and bread and wine for my horse. As I passed out I heard the postmaster, who stood in the doorway, lustily scolding the postilion for his tardiness. It did not appear to discompose him,



for he answered quite coolly that he would be ready as soon as he could get the harness in order. I meanwhile enjoyed a quiet laugh, lads, at the king's expense. Soaking the bread I had carried to the stall in some of the wine, I gave it to the noble animal, and with the rest I washed and rubbed his slender limbs, as I had many a time seen our cavalry do when they wished to prepare their horses for some extraordinary service. Before an hour had expired I was ready, and handed the postilion the promised reward. The fellow had well earned it, I can tell you, for he had to stand, meantime, any amount of abuse and threats, not only from his master, but from the king.

"It was not long after he felt the ducat in his pocket that the horses stood before the door. The king and his adjutants lost no time in mounting, and rode at full gallop out of the yard. I did the same, and soon found



myself close at the side of the king. I was now in for it.

“‘Is that you, Düring?’ he hurriedly inquired.

“‘Pardon me, your Majesty, it is I,’ was my answer.

“‘Who are you, churl,’ he cried, ‘and how do I happen to be known to you?’

“‘I know your Majesty well,’ I replied, ‘and you have long known me.’

“With an ejaculation of impatience the king drew his horse up to mine, and, looking under my hat keenly, cried: ‘Roos, you rascal! how came you here? I thought the knave had some sense of propriety,’ he added, angrily.

“‘Your Majesty thought aright,’ I returned; ‘I would not suffer my king to ride alone.’

“‘But you are not needed, sirrah,’ he cried. ‘Return instantly, you impudent scoundrel, and join the rest of my men!’



“‘At your Majesty’s command,’ said I, dryly; ‘only I would first pray you for my discharge.’

“‘For what? for what?’ he cried; ‘but you shall have it, churl, you shall have it for your insufferable insolence. You have it now, sirrah, now!’

“‘Thank you, my lord,’ said I, still riding close beside him.

“‘Knave! why do you not go back?’ said his Majesty to me again after a short silence.

“‘Because I do not wish to,’ I replied, coolly.

“‘But I command you, fellow.’

“‘Your Majesty has no further right to command after I have received my discharge.’

“‘Where do you intend to go now, sirrah?’ he hotly demanded.

“‘To follow close by your Majesty. The highway is free.’



“‘At your peril, Richard Roos! I shall shoot.’

“‘Do so, then, sire, for you will get rid of me in no other way.’

“‘That is honestly spoken, truly,’ said the king, laughing aloud and giving me a light stroke with his riding-whip. ‘You may stay beside me, Roos, for aught I care,’ he added in an altered tone. ‘You are worse than a burr, fellow, but I know, at all events, that you are to be depended upon. Ride along, my old friend; I can assure you that this will not be a pleasure-trip. Understand, I am Swedish Captain Frisch.’

“‘I hear, captain.’

“‘Spur up your horse, my man: we have no time to lose.’

“‘But my discharge?’ I inquired.

“‘Pah! Captain Frisch gave it you, but King Charles does not ratify it. Forward!’

“‘And forward we went through all that



dark night, and how we ever reached the next station without broken necks is to this day a mystery to me. Here we had a few hours' rest, but morning had scarcely dawned before he roused us out of sleep. Rossen and Düring, I can tell you, made great eyes when they first espied me, but as the king suffered me to remain, they offered no objection. Full two hours before sunrise we were in the saddle, and galloped away as madly as before. I was anxious about my brave Abdul. I knew he could not possibly stand such another day as yesterday, and I parted with the noble creature to the postmaster for a considerable sum of money, although it was not the half that he was really worth; but a pocket full of gold is better than a dead horse, and in such a mad flight as the king's he could not possibly have held out much longer. Sorry enough was I to part with him, and now I was obliged to take a



post-horse like the rest, very unlike my beautiful Arabian steed.

“From one station to another we rushed. That was a ride, lads! Never while memory lasts will I forget it. The king, in order to avoid falling into the hands of his enemies, was obliged to take all the byroads, but a dozen miles or so made but little difference to him if he only successfully accomplished his object. In this manner we rode through Hungary, Moravia, Austria, Bavaria, Würtemberg, the Palatinate, Westphalia and Mecklenburg. We almost made the tour of Germany, lengthening thereby our journey by at least one-half. Neither day nor night did the king allow us time for repose. On! on! was the watchword. Even when we stopped during the night at a station, we would scarcely close our eyes in slumber before the king would arouse us, and, almost drunken with sleep, we must again take the



saddle and forward. We rode until our panting beasts threatened to fall beneath us. But what cared he? Up mountain, down dale, along good road and bad, through ditches, over hedges, across deserts and forests—onward we rode. Such a ride as that, lads, the world never saw, nor is it likely will see soon again.

“And the worst part of it was, that the king could have made the journey so comfortably, instead of racing along at the peril of our lives. Meanwhile, the curious spectators the rest of our party met with on their way almost gaped their eyes out trying to see the great King Charles, who was far enough away, striking flint and spark from beneath his horse’s feet.

“Baron Rossen was unable to hold out, and was obliged to stay behind in Hungary. Düring kept up nobly, but at last fell from his horse in a faint, at Bavaria. Charles ran



impatiently hither and thither, while I tried to bring the poor colonel to himself. He was scarcely conscious when the restless king, whose feet the very ground under them seemed to burn, demanded how much money he had in his possession. 'Some thousand crowns in gold,' was the faint answer. 'Good!' said Charles; 'give me the half of it, then. Düring, I see you are unable to follow me; I will go on alone. Roos can stay and take care of you, and then you can both come after me.'

"Your Majesty surely would not travel alone?' cried the colonel. 'I pray you only tarry but three hours, my lord; by that time I will certainly be able to proceed.'

"That will not answer,' said the king. 'Give me five hundred crowns, and I will start at once.'

"The colonel entreated him not to venture, even going so far as to refuse the money he



demande. I soon saw that it would not do to persist in this course, for the king's eyes had begun to roll wildly, a sure sign that he was not to be trifled with any longer.

“ ‘Give him the money,’ I whispered the colonel as I stooped down, pretending to be rendering the poor man some further service, ‘and I will arrange matters as you would desire. I will take the responsibility: you see for yourself there is no capitulation in his Majesty.’

“Poor Düring drew out the purse, and while Charles hastily divided the money, I secretly left the room, and drawing the post-master, who had witnessed the whole scene, aside, whispered,

“ ‘Those men are partners, and are traveling together upon the same business. You see one of them is sick, and the other is unwilling to wait for him even three hours. Now, I have a favor to ask of you: do you give



to the impatient man the worst animal in your stable, and after he leaves let me have an easy chaise with a lively pair of horses. But quick, my man, and look to it that you do not betray me,' adding force at the same time to my persuasions by pressing in his hand two ducats. This plan had worked so admirably with the postilion that I thought I would try what effect it would have here. Again it accomplished my purpose. The postmaster provided for the king a restive but miserable, stumbling creature, and it was not long until he set out from the station alone. 'Adieu!' he called, waving his hand toward Düring and myself. 'I will see you again in Stralsund.'

"'Ride on,' thought I, 'but we will meet sooner than your Majesty thinks.'

"It was ten o'clock at night, and pitch dark, when the king set out alone from the station in a heavy fall of snow, wind and rain.



My heart bled for him, but it was his own fault, his perverse, impatient spirit, which could not brook restraint. Turning now to the colonel, who really required my services, I insisted that he should lie down and try to sleep quietly for a few hours, telling him, so as to ease his mind, about my stratagem, whereby we could without doubt catch up before morning with the king. This was welcome news, and lying down he slept soundly for at least two full hours, awakening much refreshed in mind and body. Our chaise now stood before the door; seating ourselves and whipping up the horses, we flew along like the wind.

“Just as the gray of morning struggled with the darkness of night, we espied, in the road before us, a manly form wrapped in a rider’s mantle. ‘We have him, colonel,’ said I; ‘it is the king!’

“And Charles it was, truly, almost dead



with impatience and fatigue; all efforts to spur on his poor stumbling horse were in vain. In his vexation he had leaped from his back, and was now hurrying along on foot to the next station.

“‘That wretched beast!’ he exclaimed as he fell back, almost exhausted, in the comfortable chaise. ‘But how did you get these splendid animals, Düring?’

“‘By the exercise of a little patience, my lord,’ I replied. ‘Your Majesty would have done considerably better had you stayed with us, for you not only would have been as far on your journey, but you would have gained some hours of quiet rest.’

“The king gave me a side glance, but the truth of my words seemed to have penetrated his iron head, for he leaned himself back in the corner of the vehicle and slept until we reached the next station.

“‘Horses! horses! quick! hurry!’ were his



first impetuous words as we drove into the post yard.

“A few moments and we again sat in the saddle, and galloped on as fast as before. In this manner, without rest, we rode through Germany until we reached Cassel.

“‘We are far enough now from the Turkish border not to be recognized,’ said Charles. ‘Here we can sit down and dine for once in peace.’

“We did so, and escaped, by so doing, only by a hair’s breadth of being betrayed. The landgrave of Hesse-Cassel had received intelligence that the king had left his attendants, and conjectured that in all probability his route would lie through his dominions. He had accordingly ordered one of his officers, Brigadier Kagg, who, by the way, was a countryman of ours, to arrest all strangers passing through the place; and to communicate immediately with him, so that in case



the king attempted to make his way incognito through Cassel he might at once be apprised of the fact.

“Now this fellow, Kagg, we met in the inn and ate at the same table with him. The brigadier’s suspicions seemed to be somewhat excited with reference to Captain Frisch, thinking probably that he might be the king himself. This fancy was perhaps still further strengthened by his observing that he took no wine, the abstemiousness of Charles being well known to all the world.

“‘Have you learned from your king not to drink anything but water?’ he suddenly asked across the table.

“Taking up the wineglass that stood beside his plate and emptying it, Charles said, with the utmost coolness, ‘Your health, sir! Who told you I did not drink wine?’

“Nevertheless, he made me a sign to have the horses in readiness. So soon as they



stood before the door he sprang up from the table, and, bowing derisively to the brigadier, said, 'My dear Kagg, farewell; be pleased to greet the landgrave for me;' and before the startled man could recover from his surprise we had mounted our horses, and soon dashed in wild speed through the streets and out of the gate of the city.

"We met with several similar adventures, but I have not time to tell of any more now, my lads. The night is passing away, and we must bring our story to a close. After sixteen days' riding we stood, about midnight of the 21st of November, 1714, before the walls of Stralsund. Only three hundred and thirty-six hours had we consumed in riding two hundred and eighty-six German miles. But the king had a body with sinews of steel. He cared not for fatigue. As I said, we at last stood before the gate of the fortress. The king loudly demanded admittance.



“‘The commandant has the keys, and he is in bed,’ was harshly returned. ‘Patience, my good friend! to-morrow morning early you shall be the first one to enter.’

“‘Get the keys, churl, instantly, and waken the commandant.’

“‘That will I not,’ answered the sentinel; ‘it might be somewhat the worse for me.’

“‘If you do not, it may be still worse for you, my man, I can tell you. Get the keys, knave, without another moment’s parley.’

“The tone of the king might well intimidate the poor fellow. Leaving instantly, he brought back with him the sergeant. ‘How strange!’ said the king, meantime, to us. ‘I stand before my own fortress a stranger, and cannot enter. They will sing a different tune to-morrow, methinks.’

“‘Who is he that exacts entrance at this hour of the night?’ demanded the officer.



“‘A courier from Turkey,’ answered Charles, shortly.

“‘What do you bring?’

“‘Despatches from the king of Sweden, and if I am not admitted instantly, the whole watch shall be hanged to-morrow,’ was the reply.

“Whether the sergeant had a suspicion that possibly it might be the king himself or not, he deemed it the wiser course to obtain the keys and awake the commandant. Soon creaked the ponderous gate of the fortress. Our horses trotted through, and we were in Stralsund. Charles was at once led to General Dücker, who ‘was still half asleep.’ He did not recognize the king, and, under the impression that a courier was before him, asked abruptly :

“‘What news do you bring from Turkey?’

“‘Am I, then, a stranger to my faithful subject?’ asked the king.



“The old general’s eyes were open wide enough now, I can tell you, boys. ‘My king!’ he cried, full of joy, bending the knee before him.

“‘The king! the king!’ now passed from lip to lip; and soon the streets of Stralsund that quiet night resounded with the glad cry, ‘The king has come! the king has come!’ ‘God be thanked!’ was uttered fervently by many a depressed and fainting heart. Sleep was banished from the fortress that night. The inhabitants crowded upon the streets, and cries of joy and shouts of delight rent the air. Men, brave men, as they heard the news, embraced one another and wept in one glád tumult of joyous emotion. The soldiers streamed from the barracks, surrounding the house in which they had heard the king was; and, upon further assurance that it was indeed he, added their shouts of triumph to the wild confusion. The bells with their brazen



tongues pealed forth the glad tidings, while from cannon-mouth thundered the news far out over land and sea. Soon the whole city was one full blaze of light. At the remembrance of that night, lads, my old heart still throbs high with joy.

“We were the only ones, I ween, who slept that night. In the midst of the tumult the king was led to his bed; for sixteen days he had not enjoyed one hour of quiet rest. We were obliged to cut his boots from off his swollen legs; then, throwing himself down upon his couch, he soon fell into a heavy sleep. Düring and I lay, meanwhile, at his feet upon mattresses which had been spread for us upon the floor. We needed no lullaby, lads: to sleep was sweet indeed; while up and down before our door patrolled a genuine Swedish guard.

“But we were not suffered to rest many hours. The king awoke, and, rousing us,



started out, reviewed the troops, examined the fortifications, and, in order to lose no time, 'gave orders for renewing the war with redoubled vigor.' Couriers flew in all directions, and the Swedes soon found that Charles had returned to his kingdom unchanged."

At this part of his narration the old soldier paused, gazing, meantime, sadly and abstractedly into the fire, whose burning coals still sent out the "radiance of their light over the restless sea." Olav Sparre's clear voice at length aroused him from his reverie.

"Come, come, old friend! are we to hear no more of your story? The night will soon be gone. We are all anxiously waiting to hear the rest before we leave."

"Yes, yes, lads, you shall hear, you shall hear it to the end," said the old man, sighing heavily, and starting as though rudely awakened from a deep dream. "Excuse me, children, that I lingered longer than was



necessary over the last happy hours of our king—yes, the last. But you are right, Olav; it is time we brought our story to an end.

“Charles was much gratified at the joy his subjects evinced at his presence, and I never saw him so calm and cheerful as during the first few days after his return to his Fatherland. But these were the last beams of sunshine that brightened his path. Clouds again gathered darkly over his horizon, bearing in their bosom the lightning which should scathe his iron head.

“It was not long before the tumult of war resounded upon all sides. Prussia, Saxony, Denmark and Russia ‘entered into stricter bonds of amity than ever,’ and although our king acted with his accustomed bravery, he was, in the end, unable to resist their overwhelming numbers. Six and thirty thousand men now laid siege to Stralsund, whose gar-



rison amounted to only nine thousand. The allies might have besieged it in vain had they not been specially favored.

“Lieutenant-Colonel Koppen, adjutant of the king of Prussia, had spent his youth in Stralsund, bathing often in the Baltic Sea. From this circumstance particularly he retained a recollection that just at the spot where the Swedish fortifications ended the sea was only three or four feet deep. He proposed that he should take the fort by surprise at this point. The king consenting to the undertaking, eighteen hundred men were ordered to the designated spot, wading like sea-dogs through the water. Koppen commanded the van, and sword in hand passed over confidently and successfully. One hour after midnight they set out, and in order to divert the attention of us Swedes, at the same time two thousand advanced upon the ‘causeway that led to the fort.’ We were



completely deceived by this strategy: not one of us thought of the Prussians swimming like fish through the water. Upon reaching the spot the soldiers rose up out of the sea, and before we had the slightest intimation were directly beneath us, as though they had dropped down from the clouds. We were completely taken by surprise, and the post was carried after 'a terrible slaughter.' We were now obliged to withdraw into the town, 'which was saved for this time, at least.' By this strategy of the enemy we lost four and twenty pieces of cannon; and four hundred of our men were taken prisoners.

"That was a hard blow, lads. I do not like to think of it. But a harder came soon after.

"Without obtaining possession of the island of Rügen the allies could not reckon securely upon Stralsund; this must be at once taken. Accordingly, Prince Leopold of An-



halt prepared to wrest it from us; this was a hard piece of work, but he was the very one who could accomplish it. Upon a foggy day the prince landed at the village of Stresow with twelve thousand brave troops, we having only about three thousand with which to make resistance. His first business was to fortify the place; he then entrenched his army behind a deep ditch 'fenced by chevaux-de-frise,' and there awaited our king, who did not give him time to become impatient.

"As soon as Charles learned of the landing of the prince of Anhalt, he at once set sail for the island, arriving on the evening of the same day about nine o'clock. At midnight we marched upon Stresow, expecting by our sudden attack to surprise the enemy. We reached the village so silently that we stood directly opposite the camp before they were aware of our approach. The alarm was not given until a Prussian sentinel heard the



king, in low tones, order the assault. And now a surprise awaited us, in our turn, for we had not calculated upon the broad, deep ditch before us.

“‘Ha!’ Charles exclaimed when he saw it, ‘I did not expect this. But it matters not; in and up, men!’ We clambered across the ditch, and found ourselves in the midst of the camp of the allies. At our first attack the Danes and Prussians broke in confusion, but the prince of Anhalt was a great commander, boys. Quickly collecting his disordered troops, after some hard fighting he drove us back through the ditch, pursuing us even to the plain.

“The king had his horse shot under him, and barely escaped being taken prisoner. He was recognized by a Danish officer, who, seizing him by the arm, called out, ‘Surrender, or you are a dead man!’ but Charles used effectively the pistol in his belt and



escaped upon the horse of the fallen officer. A second time was he surrounded, and a second time did he escape, bearing with him, however, a musket-shot in his breast. We soldiers did our best, but we left dead upon the field of battle five hundred of our brave comrades—among them the king's favorite generals, Grotthusen and Daldorf. Colonel Düring, also, our companion through Turkey, met his sad fate upon that sorrowful night. I, too, received a shot in my breast, which rendered me for the time unfit for service. My comrades carried me to a place of refuge. Some days later we were obliged to surrender, and Rügen as well as we fell into the hands of the enemy. The king, meanwhile, owed his life a second time to the exertions of Count Poniatowski, who, apprehending that Charles would share the fate of his army, hurried with him to the coast, where a small boat was in waiting, in which, no



wiser and as perverse as ever, he returned to Stralsund.

“Three long years passed away before I saw the king again, shortly before the unfortunate shot that caused his sudden and early death. Meantime, the king had been shut up in Stralsund, and had lost everything but his indomitable courage. A comrade related to me after my return an instance of this. One day whilst he was dictating a letter to his secretary, a bomb fell through the roof of the house into the room next to where they were sitting. The secretary, terrified lest it should come down upon them, let his pen drop out of his hand. ‘What is the reason,’ said the king, with great composure, ‘that you do not write?’ The secretary could only utter with a faltering voice, ‘Ah, sire, the bomb.’ ‘Well,’ replied the king, ‘what has the bomb to do with what I am dictating to you? Go on, sir, go on.’ But, although



he still retained his courage and skill, he was unable, now Rügen was in the enemy's hand, to save Stralsund. Upon the night of the 20th of December, 1715, he embarked in a sloop, passing the ships and batteries of the enemy, and at last reached Ystad, in Scania, at once repairing to Carlsrona.

“But of these three years I can tell you nothing about the king that I saw with my own eyes. I was, as I said before, a Prussian prisoner, and lay for a long time disabled by my wounds, but I heard enough to cause me the deepest sorrow and regret. Through the greatest exertion the king at length gathered together an army to lead against Denmark. It was in the very depth of winter, and he calculated upon marching over the frozen sound, but, thawing weather setting in, he was forced to change his course, and he invaded Norway instead. At first the Danes were everywhere defeated, but, reinforcements



arriving from Denmark, and his provisions failing, he was obliged to return to Sweden with the loss of almost a third of his army.

“For a short time he rested, but only to prepare anew for war. In the year 1718 Charles collected a large army, thereby draining the country of its last resource. This army he divided into two corps. The one under General Armfeldt he ordered to the north, the other, which he commanded in person, he led to the south of Norway, where he laid siege to Frederickshald, which the Danes had fortified anew. General Armfeldt laid siege, meanwhile, to Drontheim, but was unable to take it. The greater part of his army perished with hunger and cold on his retreat to Sweden. Scarcely five hundred of the thousands who entered upon that unfortunate campaign ever reached their Fatherland.



“As I said before, several years had passed since I had seen the king. After escaping from the Prussian prison, I made my way to Frederickshald, before which city I heard Charles was encamped. He was inspecting the trench when I first saw him, which, notwithstanding the frozen condition of the ground, he had opened before the fortress in company with Colonel Siquier, a French engineer. I did not take a fancy to the man from the first; his face had, I thought, a lowering, evil expression. I watched him closely whilst he was engaged in conversation with the king, who was reproaching him severely with the slow progress of his work. Siquier received all his recriminations calmly, but I noted the sinister smile that passed over his face as he excused himself for his delay by pleading the frozen condition of the earth, which was, in truth, at this time as hard as a rock. With a gesture of impa-



tience the king turned from him, his eye, as he did so, lighting upon me.

“‘Roos, my brave old friend!’ he cried, heartily, extending to me at the same time his hand. Claspng it in mine, deeply moved by his grace, I kissed it fervently, bending my knee before him. ‘What has brought you to Frederickshald? I thought you were dead, Roos, years ago.’

“‘No, no, your Majesty,’ I replied; ‘I still live, and my last drop of blood belongs to you. I trust you will suffer me to fight at your side, as in years gone by.’

“‘You are welcome, Roos, heartily welcome,’ said he as he raised me up. ‘Colonel Siquier, an old friend, Colonel Roos, one of the few who has survived Narva, Poltava and Bender. I need brave men now, particularly. Come with me and we will make the round of the fortress, my man.’

“My advent, apparently, was not very



agreeable to the Frenchman. As we left, I noticed that he conversed in a low tone, looking toward me at the same time, with a fellow who stood near, a countryman of his, by the way, called Mégret. His looks and whisperings troubled me but little, however, for I was still in favor with my sovereign, who at once ordered me a tent near his own.

“The hardships and fatigues of eighteen years had turned the king’s constitution to iron. In the severest weather he slept upon straw, or a board laid upon the bare ground, with no other covering than his mantle. Many a poor fellow froze at his post, but I heard no complaints, for Charles did not spare himself.

“The siege progressed but slowly. Upon the morning of the 11th of December I again found Siquier with him, and, as before, Charles was indulging in some bitter



invectives against his most unaccountable tardiness. Again did I see that malignant smile darken his unpleasant countenance: it awakened within me an indefinable apprehension of evil. His excuse was plausible as before, and he vowed that within eight days the work should be accomplished. Notwithstanding this assurance, the king left him very ungraciously, and when we were alone I availed myself of the opportunity to warn him to be upon his guard against the Frenchman.

“Unfortunately, I could not persuade him to listen. He interrupted me with, ‘I know all you would say, my good fellow; let us hear no more about it. I know the man. You must not speak evil of any when you talk to your king, Roos.’

“I attempted to excuse myself, but he would not allow it, saying, ‘Enough, enough, Roos; you have been a faithful servant to



me, old friend, but not one word more concerning Siquier. It is now time we were with our men at morning service.'

"It was the first Sunday in Advent, lads. All unnecessary work was suspended, and we listened, I trust devoutly, to both the morning and afternoon service. Late in the evening, toward ten o'clock I think it was, when I entered his tent, both Frenchmen, Siquier and Mégret, were there. On a sudden it occurred to the king that he would betake himself to the trench, and take a view by starlight of the progress of the siege. As a matter of course, the rest of us followed.

"Charles, as usual, took a most dangerous position, 'standing upon a gabion and leaning with his arm over the parapet.' Turning suddenly to me, he said: 'Roos, my good fellow, go to my tent and bring me the telescope which lies upon the table.'

"I turned to obey, but an indefinable



presentiment of evil came over me in a most remarkable manner, and I delayed, excusing myself, as I did so, by saying: 'It is bitter cold, your Majesty: would it not be well for you to defer your examination until to-morrow?'

"'No, no Roos; it must be done now,' he replied.

"It did not do to linger. I hastened to the tent with all possible speed, for I did not like the idea of leaving him alone with those two Frenchmen. On my way back I heard the report of a shot: my heart sank within me. Almost breathless, I reached the trench, where I was met by Siquier. 'Where is the king?' I cried, in great excitement.

"'The play is at an end,' he coolly replied. 'He has been struck by a ball from the fortress.'

"'Scoundrel! knave! you, and you alone, are answerable for this!' I cried aloud, in my



rage, as I rushed madly past him. Ah! it was only too true! The king was dead—yes, dead! A ball had entered his temple and done its fatal work. His head lay upon the parapet, his right hand still convulsively grasping the hilt of his sword.

“My loud and bitter outcry drew the guard to the spot. In these arms, lads, was the royal corpse borne to his tent. My heart told me that the deadly ball had not come from hostile hand, but that our king had fallen by the shot of a cowardly assassin. From the fortress musket-balls only had been fired, but Charles’ death was caused by a ball from a pistol. To this day I firmly believe that Siquier was his murderer. When they sought for him he could not be found. But my king was dead, and with him died all the hopes and aspirations of my life. I loved him, and he had ever been to me a kind and generous master.”



The old man was silent. His heart had been deeply shaken through these still living reminiscences, and tears glistened upon his gray lashes. A grave and mournful silence for some moments fell upon the little group that surrounded the old warder.

“Peace to his ashes, and rest to the heart that so impatiently beat in that hero breast!” said the stranger in low and reverent tones that broke the solemn stillness, laying his hand meanwhile, gently and sympathizingly, upon that of the old soldier. “And you, colonel—what was done for you after his death?”

“For me?” replied the old man, starting as though from a deep dream—“For me? Oh, it mattered not what became of me after my protector was dead. No one at Stockholm knew of my claim or appointment. I was thankful and content when they gave me, at last, the position of warder in this watch-



tower. I have lived here many a long year, thinking often in times past of what *might have been* had my king been alive. But it matters not *now*. I am content! I have learned in this lonely tower, lads, to 'look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are *eternal*.' This prayer-book," said the old man, laying his hand reverently upon the worn cover, "I found in the king's pocket after his death: it is a sacred relic to me. I would not exchange it, and the consciousness of the approval of my king, for riches or honor. Many a mortification and slight has been rendered the easier by their possession. And now, children, midnight has long passed, the storm is hushed, the sea is calm, and I need you no longer. Leave me, my friends, and forget that you have this night witnessed an old man's tears."



The young cadets rose at these words, for they saw that the warder would fain be alone with his thoughts and emotions. Silently and tenderly pressing his hand, they quietly withdrew. The stranger, bending toward the bowed head, whispered a few words gently in his ear. The old man started, but before he had recovered from his surprise the manly form had vanished in the darkness, and Richard Roos, restrained by duty, could not follow.

Four or five weeks later, upon a clear, fresh morning, Colonel Sparre, Olav and his companions with bright and joyous faces again ascended the height that led to the tower. The old warder was seated musingly before his door, tranquilly enjoying the quiet morning hour. His face brightened visibly at their approach, and, greeting them cordially, he called out in cheery tones :

“What has brought you up here, friends,



at so unusual an hour? Although no prophet or son of a prophet, I venture to predict that it is something pleasant, judging from your happy faces."

"We bring with us the fruit of fidelity," responded Colonel Sparre, "although late in maturing. Take it, my old friend, and may it refresh your heart! Colonel Roos, I have the honor of handing to you this commission as lieutenant-colonel in the Swedish army, which for twenty years has been suffered to lie forgotten in the chancery of King Charles XII. Take it, my friend, the well-deserved reward of years of devotion."

"My God!" cried the old man, white and trembling with emotion—"My God! I thank thee! But no, it cannot be. Surely you would not jest, colonel, with an old soldier? Tell me, is it so, indeed? But I can no longer serve my Fatherland. I am old and weak."



“His Highness, in view of this, my friend, has given you a pension,” said the colonel, taking at the same time a second paper from his pocket. “You draw from this day, Roos, your full salary as colonel until your death, with the privilege of fixing your residence wherever you may choose.”

“‘Bless the Lord, O my soul!’” exclaimed the old man, his blue eyes raised toward heaven, “‘and all that is within me bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! Who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies, who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. Bless the Lord, O my soul!’”

The colonel and his youthful companions stood reverently with uncovered heads while



the old man poured forth his song of thanksgiving, deeply moved by his profound emotion.

"Who has interceded for a disabled old soldier, colonel? Tell me his name, that I may thank him."

"One who visited you upon that stormy night when your vigilance without a doubt saved the Torstenson from shipwreck," replied the colonel. "Do you not remember, my friend? He learned for the first time by that beacon-fire of the great debt Sweden owed to you."

"Who is he, colonel, who is he?"

"The *Duke Adolph Friedrich von Holstein*, a near kinsman of your king, Charles XII. Your fidelity touched him, your watchfulness preserved his life. He would show by some means his gratitude, and, lo! this is the result. It is only your due, my dear old friend, and we rejoice with you most heartily."

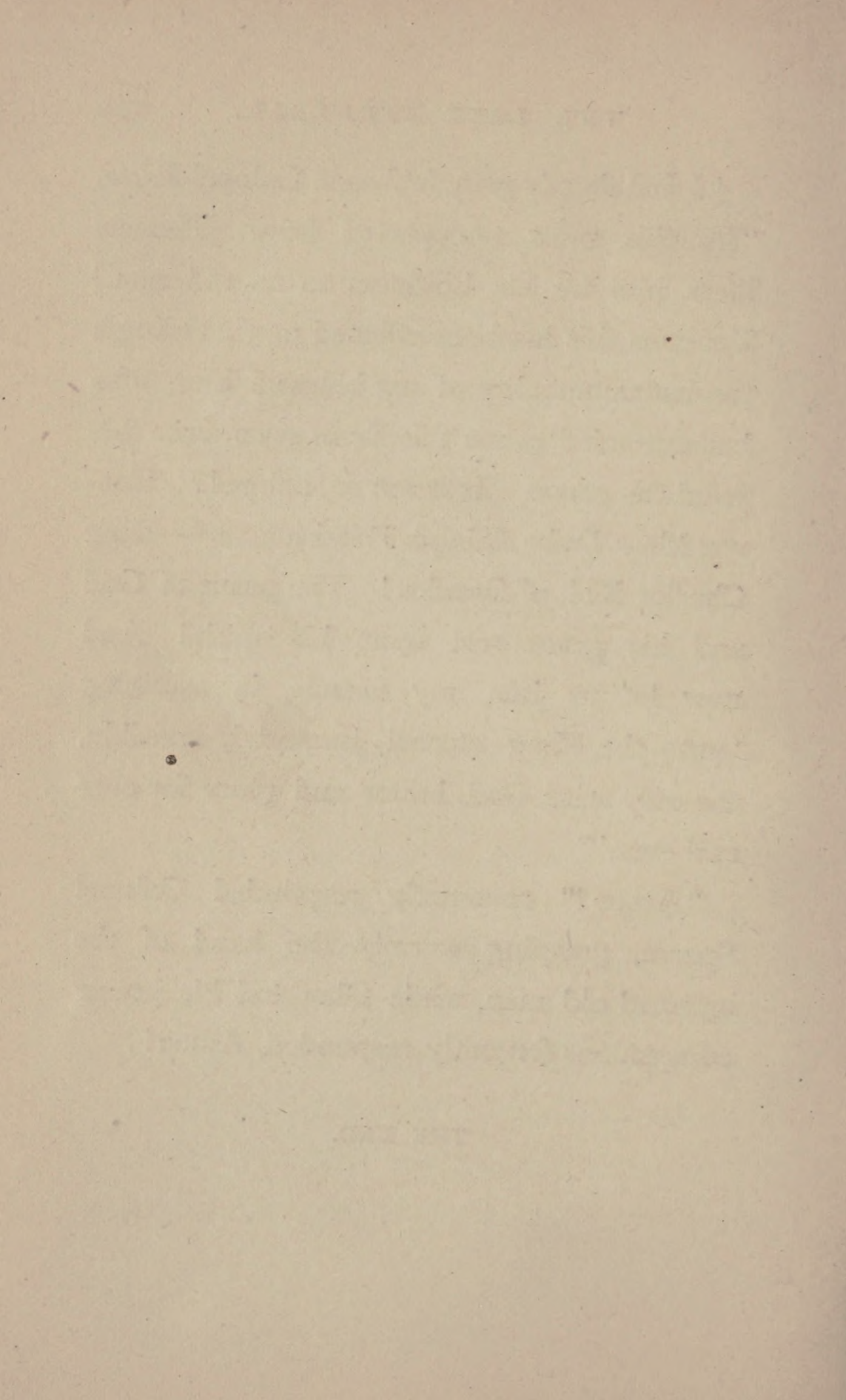


“I feel deeply grateful,” said Colonel Roos, “for this most unexpected favor. Heaven bless him for his kindness to an old man! Yet even this has been effected partly through the instrumentality of my beloved king, who has extended to me this favor even from beyond the grave. Is it not so, colonel? Heaven bless Duke Adolph Friedrich, and—King Charles XII. of Sweden! The peace of God and his grace rest upon his spirit! And now let us join, my friends, in ascribing ‘unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, honor and glory for ever and ever.’”

“Amen!” reverently responded Colonel Sparre, grasping warmly the hand of the agitated old man, while Olav and his young companions fervently responded, Amen!

THE END.



























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